

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: December 5, 2008

Six and Seven Year Old Boys Stone Kitten to Death

Too Young for Charges, Sheriff says Help for Boys is Critical

(Phoenix, AZ) Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies and the Sheriff's Animal Crimes Unit have concluded an investigation of two boys, six and seven years old, living in an East Mesa trailer park who admit to stoning and later hanging to death a four month old kitten.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio says the boys are too young to be charged with animal cruelty and apparently will not be getting help from Child Protective Services.

Deputies say that language and cultural differences made it difficult to persuade both boys' parents of the urgent need for counseling but ultimately they have agreed to perhaps seek counseling for the boys.

The investigation began with a call to the Sheriff's Office on October 23, 2008 from a neighbor who found a dead cat. Deputies went to the neighborhood of one of the two boys in the 9000 block of Apache Trail in Mesa and found the kitten hanging by its neck from a backyard tree. (Photo attached)

The boys had apparently used a wire from the video game controller they were playing, Grand Theft Auto, to hoist up the kitten. The animal's head had been injured by blows from a rock.

Arpaio questions why these young children were allowed to play such a violent video game.

"This game allows players to kill cops and rape women," Arpaio says. "It's little wonder why they perpetrated such violence against that little animal."

100 West Washington, Suite 1900, Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Phone: (602) 876-1801 Fax: (602) 258-2081

Media Contact: SheriffsMediaRequests@MCSO.Maricopa.Gov

The boys will avoid criminal prosecution as state law prohibits charging anyone under the age of eight (8) with a crime. Child Protective Services were contacted by the Sheriff's deputies but declined getting involved in the case saying the circumstances of the case were outside the criteria required to help the boys and their families.

Arpaio says the Sheriff's Office child forensic specialist, trained to properly question children, was asked into the case to conduct an interview with the two boys in the presence of their parents.

"The kind of psychological care these boys need to avoid any further acts of violence against animals or people will be very expensive," Arpaio says. "Both families are likely to be greatly burdened by the medical help required." Further complicating the family situation is the fact that the mother of the seven-year-old boy is an illegal alien.

The Sheriff is hopeful someone in the counseling community will come forward to offer their services on a volunteer basis. The Sheriff's deputies have contacted ASU where a new program has begun which specializes in these kinds of cases.

"This level of animal abuse at such a young age could be a predictor of worse violence in the future," Arpaio says. "Though it is a little unusual for us to get involved in this way, we're doing whatever we can to find the guidance these two boys need to avoid that."

Any qualified child counselor who might consider volunteering their services in this case is asked to contact the Sheriff's case investigator at 602 876 1681.

>> End <<

100 West Washington, Suite 1900, Phoenix, Arizona 85003
Phone: (602) 876-1801 Fax: (602) 258-2081
Media Contact: SheriffsMediaRequests@MCSO.Maricopa.Gov