



# **KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE**

## **STATE ATTORNEY**



### **ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Medley Councilwoman Ana Lilia Stefano Charged Food Bank Allegedly Defrauded Through Non-Profit Foundation**

Miami (November 2, 2021) - Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Jose Arrojo, Executive Director of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, announce the charging of Medley Councilwoman Ana Lilia Stefano with two (2) felony crimes related to her activities as the Executive Director of the Santana Moss Foundation.

“Allegedly defrauding a charity for one’s own personal benefit can never find acceptance in this community,” said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. “Utilizing a leadership position of a nonprofit corporation made these alleged crimes possible but having an elected position should have made such actions ethically inconceivable.”

Ana Lilia Stefano has been charged with:

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud over \$50,000 (1st Degree Felony)
- 1 Count - Grand Theft over \$20,000 (2nd Degree Felony)

These charges relate to the alleged defrauding of the nonprofit food bank “Feeding South Florida” of an estimated \$24,000 of food items and the alleged selling of food donated to the Santana Moss Foundation by the Feeding South Florida.

The Santana Moss Foundation, a Florida nonprofit corporation, was created by 14-year NFL wide receiver Santana Moss in 2001. As a former Miami Carol City Senior High School and University of Miami football star, Moss sought a way to assist the youth of Carol City (now incorporated as the City of Miami Gardens) by running sports clinics and other community programs to help improve their lives.

During the period of the investigation, Stefano continuously served as the Executive Director of the Santana Moss Foundation. Stefano runs the Foundation, and she has maintained exclusive control over all bank accounts, donations, vehicles, facilities, and other assets of the Foundation, and is also responsible for meeting governmental reporting requirements. The Foundation’s status as a federally recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization was revoked

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earlier in 2021 for failure to file required Internal Revenue Service documents. Moss, who now resides in the Washington D.C. area, was previously listed in Florida records as the Treasurer of the Foundation but he had no part in its operations and was surprised that the Foundation still existed as a legal entity.

In 2014, Stefano launched the Foundation's free-grocery program in Medley which has been the Foundation's primary focus since that time. The nonprofit food bank, Feeding South Florida, is the source of the free food, obtained from major retailers such as Walmart, Publix, Costco, Aldi and Target. Feeding South Florida partners with local churches and charitable organizations to distribute donated food items to those in need. Through Stefano, the Santana Moss Foundation became one of the partner organizations with the knowledge that the sale of any donated food for any reason was strictly prohibited.

A volunteer who worked with the Santana Moss Foundation provided information and electronic records supporting the allegation that Stefano was selling donated food items to local religious organizations and healthcare clinics in Medley and surrounding towns. The volunteer provided the names of several paying "customers" involved in this alleged scheme, along with electronic records such as text messages and computer screen shots he exchanged with Stefano and other parties regarding the food-related transactions. Customers paying for food via check were instructed to indicate the monies were for "maintenance", "program maintenance" or other generic descriptions unrelated to the actual purpose of the purchase of food.

Nelson C. Bellido, Chairperson of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust stated: "We thank the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office and the staff at the Ethics Commission involved in the investigation that led to the eventual arrest of Ms. Stefano. It is through such cooperative efforts to combat fraud that we can try to deter others from committing similar acts that Ms. Stefano is alleged to have committed. Violating the Ethics Code, in this case on multiple occasions, uncovered criminal acts that the Ethics Commission reported to the State Attorney's Office and resulted in the eventual prosecution of this individual. The Ethics Commission will continue to aggressively pursue those who violate the ethics code in the quest to restore the public's trust in Miami-Dade County."

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