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**ROCKFORD RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY
TO ILLEGALLY POSSESSING A FIREARM**

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); PAUL A. LOGLI, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and CHET EPPERSON, Rockford Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

CRAIG L. WISE, 26, (DOB: 05/07/1980), 720 Linden Avenue, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty today in federal court in Rockford to the federal charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

In pleading guilty, Wise admitted that on August 30, 2006, he possessed a loaded Colt .22 caliber handgun while riding as a passenger in a vehicle. Rockford Police Officers stopped the vehicle for a traffic violation and a subsequent search resulted in the seizure of the gun. Wise, who had been previously convicted of a felony, admitted he knowingly possessed the gun which had traveled across state lines prior to his possession of it.

First charged by the Winnebago County States Attorney's Office under state law, Wise was transferred to federal court where he was charged under tough federal firearms laws as part of the Project Safe Neighborhoods program. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an intensive, cooperative effort between local, state, and federal law enforcement to attack gun crimes. The cornerstone of the program is that every state defendant with a gun will be reviewed for possible federal prosecution in order to obtain the harshest penalties for the worst offenders. Additional information about Project Safe Neighborhoods may be found at www.psn.gov.

Sentencing for Wise will be conducted on May 4, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. Wise faces a possible maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. The actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines. Wise was arrested the federal charge on November 1, 2006 and has remained in custody since his arrest.

The Rockford Office of the ATF and the Rockford Police Department investigated this case. It is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph D. Pedersen.

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