



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Office of Consumer Protection
DCCA News Release

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**DCCA'S OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION
SUES OPERATOR OF MAUI CAMP**

Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs Director Mark Recktenwald announced today that the department has sued the operator of a Maui summer camp that closed abruptly in July.

The lawsuit was filed by the Department's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) in Maui Circuit Court. It seeks restitution for the families who lost money after the camp closed, civil penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation of state consumer protection laws, and attorneys' fees.

The lawsuit alleges that Raymond L. Thomas, also known as Llew Lazarus among other aliases, committed deceptive business practices while operating Aloha Adventure Camps in Makawao, Maui. Those allegedly deceptive practices include operating the camp with a phony insurance certificate, and failing to provide refunds to campers after the camp was closed.

Thomas's camp offered to provide overnight accommodations for campers at a cost of approximately \$1,150 per weekly session for activities such as sailing, photography, swimming, hula dancing and parasailing.

Stephen Levins, executive director of OCP, said that more than 100 campers and their families have filed complaints with his office. "We are seeking restitution for each consumer who failed to receive a refund. Since he ran off without even trying to make good on what he owed, we'll also ask the court to impose penalties that could reach a total of more than \$1, 000, 000," Levins said.

The owner of the property where the camp was conducted, the Girl Scout Council of Hawaii, revoked Thomas' right to use the property after it discovered that Thomas lacked the required insurance. Thomas left the island without leaving a forwarding address or any information about how campers or their families could contact him. His whereabouts remains unknown.

"Families of campers have lost thousands of dollars due to Mr. Thomas's conduct. Moreover, some campers were left stranded, and their families had to fly from the mainland to take them home." Recktenwald said. "We will do everything in our power to obtain restitution for all of his victims."

The lawsuit also seeks a permanent injunction against Thomas, which would bar him from committing future fraudulent, deceptive and illegal practices in Hawaii.

The case is being handled by OCP attorney Lisa Tong. For further information, please contact Bill Brennan at 586-2622.

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