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**ROCKFORD MAN CONVICTED OF GUN CHARGE
AS A CONVICTED FELON**

ROCKFORD – A Rockford, Ill. man was convicted today after a three-day trial on a federal gun charge. Nicholas Stenson, 28, was found guilty by a federal jury following a trial before U.S. District Judge Frederick J. Kapala for illegally possessing a firearm as a convicted felon.

According to the indictment and evidence at trial, on July 10, 2011, shortly after 2:00 am, members of the Rockford Police Department's M3 Unit observed Stenson on Rock Street standing next to a green Pontiac. When officers parked their squad car near the Pontiac and activated the emergency lights, Stenson ran to the back of the Pontiac, reached into his waistband and threw a gun underneath the Pontiac. Officers recovered the gun thrown by Stenson – a black Colt .45 handgun loaded with six rounds of Blazer .45 caliber ammunition.

Stenson was originally charged in state court and 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 defendant committing an offense involving 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.

Stenson faces a maximum sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole. The actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing is scheduled for January 9, 2013, at 2:30 p.m.

The verdict was announced by Gary S. Shapiro, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; W. Larry Ford, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives; Joseph Bruscato, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and Chet Epperson, Chief of the Rockford Police Department.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Scott R. Paccagnini and Monica V. Mallory.

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