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**Media Statement for Immediate Release**  
**on Behalf of the Family of Thomas and Clara Datre**

*by Kevin Kearon, Esq.*

This morning, father and son, Thomas Datre, Sr. and Tom Datre, Jr., were arraigned on an indictment charging various environmental crimes. They pled not guilty to all charges and will defend themselves in Court.

History will record that the public crucifixion of the Datre family for the last eight months was one of the lowest, most shameful moments in Long Island history.

What has been done to this family is an outrage.

Any suggestion that the Datre family, in any way, shape or form, knowingly put anyone at risk, ANYONE: babies, children playing soccer, brave, returning veterans or fish for that matter, by knowingly using toxic or dangerous construction materials at the soccer field project at Roberto Clemente Park in Brentwood, the Veterans Way site in Islandia or anywhere else on Planet Earth for that matter is a vile, repugnant and demonstrable lie.

We reject every single charge in today's indictment as untrue or otherwise non-criminal.

The Dattres are grateful for and wish to thank their many supporters and friends. They are also grateful for our courts of law and for the presumption of innocence the law guarantees them. They and we believe that any fair-minded review of the facts in this case will demonstrate that this indictment has no merit, was ill-considered and, upon scrutiny, should be dismissed without trial.

Since April, Newsday and the Suffolk County District Attorney's office have conducted parallel and overlapping investigations looking into a variety of issues within the Town of Islip including, the ill-fated soccer field project at Roberto Clemente Park in Brentwood. As a consequence, the Dattres have been vilified and publicly tried and convicted in the media before the grand jury was even convened.

The true story of how a lawful and praiseworthy public/private partnership to try to improve a long-neglected, crime-ridden neighborhood by improving a public park, at the specific

request of local residents and churchgoers, and with the express permission from the Town of Islip, who supervised the whole project, by the construction of two soccer fields for the children and residents of that community, was turned into a so-called toxic dumping scandal, has yet to be told.

Somebody sold the District Attorney's Office a bill of goods, one based on false assumption after false assumption, erroneous fact after erroneous fact, public panic, political damage control, bad science, amateurish and incompetent environmental testing methods, conflicts of interest and political opportunism, and is a staggering indictment of a number of political institutions.

Asbestos is as frightening to people as ebola. The idea of giant dust clouds of asbestos settling on homes and cars and into lungs was precisely the image created by the shameless fear-mongering of people who knew or should have known better. Panic set in and begat public outrage which begat finger pointing amongst Town officials and others and a fictional narrative about payoffs to Town officials to allow toxic dumping was spun.

The list of stakeholders in this so-called scandal is a long one and reaches just about every corner of the Town of Islip and Suffolk County politics.

Tom, Sr. and Clara Datre are near lifelong Brentwood and Town of Islip residents. They are law-abiding, tax-paying, hard-working, small business people who have worked their entire lives to better the lives of their fellow Brentwood, Town of Islip and Long Island residents. Until recently, they were pillars and respected members of their community without a whiff of scandal. Tom, Sr. is an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Navy, which makes the Veteran's Way component of the narrative absurd and additionally painful. Their family business specialized in building affordable housing for Suffolk's poorest residents. Their charitable fundraising is legendary.

Now their lives, family businesses and reputations lay in tatters. Over nothing.

The greatest and most tragic of all the falsehoods in this case and the one that does the greatest disservice to the residents and taxpayers of the Town of Islip and of Brentwood, in particular, is that this park is dangerous or toxic on account of the work that was done on the soccer fields. The evidence to support such an assertion is flimsy, and was acquired without regard for sound scientific principles and methods and was promoted by people and politicians in whose interest it was to both find a scapegoat for such a hot potato issue and, as a bonus, see the Datre family and their Republican Party fundraising capacity damaged or destroyed.

What seems to have gotten lost in all of this is that the Suffolk County Department of Health and the Suffolk County Executive seem to have recognized the overblown nature of the reporting of the testing results and to assuage public panic, they issued an unprecedented joint written statement and delivered it to each and every resident of the Town of Islip reassuring them that their joint investigation concluded that risk to health, if any, from the soccer field project was minimal.

If Roberto Clemente Park has any current environmental issues at all, it had them long before the soccer field project got started.

The park was built on top of an old sand pit, over-mined for so long and dug so deep it breached the water table below. The giant hole filled with water and was used thereafter for years as a favorite local swimming hole until a famous tragedy involving the drowning of a father and his young son while swimming at its bottom forced its closure. The giant pit was filled with everything the residents could find, including, it is believed, with abandoned automobiles to fill and help partially re-elevate the site. Thereafter, the site was designated as the Town's official open air landfill. For decades, in the mid-20th century, Town garbage trucks delivered all or much of the Town's garbage there. After the site was discontinued as an official landfill, it was continued to be used by Town residents and others as an illegal dump. Eventually it was cleaned up and converted to a park. The area of the park on which the soccer fields were being built was underutilized because of its uneven and hilly terrain.

When the local church residents decided to try to build soccer fields, they approached the Town and got permission to try to find volunteers from the community to help build the fields at no or low cost to Town residents. They recruited local merchants to help them with the acquisition, delivery, processing and spreading of the necessary material known as "clean fill" to stabilize, elevate, level, groom and hydro-seed the site.

Tom Datre, Jr. was one of those merchants. Along with many others. He was proud of his work. There was no toxic dumping. There was no dumping at all. There was delivery of truckloads of clean fill. No 55-gallon drums of toxic waste with skulls and crossbones as you've been led to believe. No foodstuffs. No petroleum products. No heavy metals. No household garbage. No construction debris. No sinks. No refrigerators, no appliances of any type.

Just dirt. Legal dirt. Certified and permitted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection as legal and safe and proper for the types of applications it was being used for.

The project was loud and dirty and dusty and interrupted several times for different reasons, especially due to the record setting snowfalls last winter, which delayed completion. Town officials were looking forward to the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the soccer fields this past spring. Every local politician would have been there and Tom, Jr. and the other volunteers would have and should have been publicly praised.

It never happened. The first terrible blizzard of the winter left one giant pile of dirt and concrete unprocessed and covered with snow. Kids started sledding and playing on the big pile and parents noted correctly that it was a dangerous condition for kids to be playing on. A piece of concrete here. A single, ubiquitously photographed broken bottle there. An asbestos roof tile perhaps somewhere in the park and next thing you know the rumor mill is in full operation and like rats from a sinking ship all of a sudden nobody in the Town of Islip seems to know anything about anything except how to run from the issue. The finger pointing was endless and the political exploitation of these issues in the run up to last months local, state and federal elections was circus-like and unseemly.

The exploitation of the false asbestos narrative by a variety of partisan parties was the equivalent of yelling "FIRE" in crowded theater. A total falsehood. Nonetheless, residents remembered all the dust and the mud in the street, assumed the worst and stormed Town Hall demanding answers and remedial action.

The idea that Tom Datre, Jr., in broad daylight, with the Suffolk County Police, DEC, and Town and park employees passing and observing the operations of the site every day it was in operation with the Datre family name emblazoned on every bright green truck, every piece of heavy equipment and every worker's shirt in more places than the name Trump appears in Atlantic City, was conducting some type of secret toxic waste dumping operation defies common sense and doesn't pass the straight face test.

The manner in which press conferences were conducted during this investigation essentially promising the public that heads were going to roll was unprecedented and, we believe, unfortunate. It created an irreversible public expectation of an indictment in spite of the absence of reliable testing and accurate reporting of the results and their significance to determine whether or not a crime had even occurred in the first place.

The so-called scientific testing of the so-called crime scene was flawed in many respects. The results were misinterpreted and we believe misrepresented to or misunderstood by the District Attorney. We understand why the investigation took place. No smoking gun was ever found because there wasn't one. No crimes were committed, certainly not by the Datres and, at worst, the Town was informal in its granting of permission and supervision of the project.

We encourage everyone involved to tone down the incendiary and inciteful rhetoric.

The Datres will defend this case vigorously and look forward to their exoneration and the restoration of their good family name.