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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: MARCH 10, 2008

**TANEY COUNTY RESIDENT SAMUEL STEPHENSON FOUND GUILTY OF
POSSESSION OF METHAMPHETAMINE**

FORSYTH, MO - Taney County Prosecuting Attorney, Jeffrey M. Merrell announced today that Samuel Stephenson, dob: 10/04/60, of Rockaway Beach, Missouri was convicted on Monday, March 3, 2008, by a twelve (12) person jury, of possession of methamphetamine. Mr. Stephenson was riding as a passenger in his Ford Windstar mini-van on April 30, 2006, when Branson Police Officer Matthew Hotz pulled the vehicle over for not displaying license plates. The driver of the vehicle was arrested for driving with a suspended license and placed under arrest. Officer Hotz then identified Samuel Stephenson as the passenger and owner of the vehicle. Officer Hotz searched the vehicle incident to the driver's arrest and discovered two (2) prescription bottles in plain view in an open console. Both bottles were labeled for hydrocodone and were prescribed to Samuel Stephenson. Officer Hotz discovered a plastic baggy containing a white powder substance in one pill bottle and a green leafy substance in the other pill bottle. The Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Lab tested the items and identified them as methamphetamine and marijuana, both of which are controlled substances. The jury deliberated for twenty-five (25) minutes before returning the guilty verdict.

Taney County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Rachel Beeton was pleased with the result stating, "This case has been on the court's docket for almost two (2) years. A jury of Mr. Stephenson's peers found him guilty and he will now be held accountable."

Sentencing in this case is set for April 17, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. Possession of methamphetamine, a class C felony in Missouri, carries a range of punishment of one (1) day to one (1) year in the Taney County Jail, one (1) year to seven (7) years in the Missouri Department of Corrections and/or a fine not to exceed five-thousand (5,000) dollars.

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