



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Woman Found Guilty of Stealing Cargo Trailer

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Sarah T. Eaton, 33, of Springfield, MO was convicted last week by a Greene County Jury of one count of stealing for the theft of a cargo trailer on May 21, 2013 following a jury trial before the Honorable David Munton. The jury deliberated for over three hours before delivering their verdict.

The evidence at trial showed that the defendant and her husband drove their pickup truck to a vacant house, where a black cargo trailer sat near the driveway. The couple began to tow the trailer using the truck, but the trailer struck a basketball pole and became stuck in the soft ground. The defendant told neighbors and police that she had purchased the trailer on Craigslist. However, the owners of the home and trailer told the Springfield Police Department that they did not know the defendant, and they had not sold the trailer or given anyone permission to move it. The defendant could not provide proof of the alleged sale, title for the trailer, or contact information for the person she claimed was the seller. The defendant's husband, who was charged as a co-defendant, pled guilty to stealing the trailer late last year.

At the close of the State's case-in-chief, the defendant moved for acquittal, citing an old case which held that a woman who committed a crime in the presence of her husband was presumed to act under his influence and, therefore, would not be guilty by reason of duress or coercion. The State argued this law was antiquated, both legally and in reality, and specifically cited a Missouri Supreme Court case that held that a woman is presumed to think independently of her spouse. The defendant's motion for acquittal was overruled.

Subject: Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Press Release, State v. Eaton, 1331-CR02182-01

The defendant is a prior and persistent felony offender. She has multiple prior felony convictions for burglary in the second degree, stealing, and forgery. The defendant remains in the custody of the Greene County Jail and faces a range of punishment of one to fifteen years in the Missouri Department of Corrections. Judge Munton set a sentencing hearing for July 11, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. following a sentencing assessment report by the Department of Probation and Parole.

The Greene County Prosecutor's Office encourages all residents to use caution when buying and selling online. Some services, like Craigslist, allow users to remain relatively anonymous, which can complicate transactions that fail to meet either party's expectations. Residents are also encouraged to inform themselves of Missouri laws that apply to sales of "big ticket" items, like motor vehicles and trailers. Further information may be found at www.dor.mo.gov.

The Greene County Prosecutor's Office applauds the neighbors who noticed suspicious activity near the empty house and notified law enforcement. But for their observations and quick thinking, the trailer might never have been recovered. We thank these good neighbors for demonstrating such exemplary citizenship.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Sarah Devlin and Jake Kohut. It was investigated by the Springfield Police Department, and Detective James Calhoon was the lead investigator assigned to the case.

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