



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jury Finds Man Guilty of Sex Crimes after Seven-Year-Old Testifies

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Wade A. Stuckley, 50, of Ava, Missouri was convicted on Wednesday, September 20, 2017, by a Greene County jury of the sexual abuse of a four-year-old in May and June of 2014. Stuckley was living with the victim's mother at the time and was alone with her child at various times. After the victim's grandmother witnessed the four-year-old exhibit signs of physical pain in her genital area shortly after the defendant moved in, the victim's grandmother contacted law enforcement. The victim was eventually removed from her mother's custody and placed with the victim's grandmother.

During a forensic interview at the Child Advocacy Center, the victim disclosed that the defendant had touched inside of her vagina. When interviewed by law enforcement officers, the defendant initially denied that he had ever been alone with the victim and denied that he had touched her vagina. The victim's mother also denied that the victim had ever been alone with the defendant. In a later interview, the defendant admitted to inserting his fingers into the victim's vagina and touching her vagina four to five times in an approximate two-week period. The defendant described one instance in which his pinky finger slipped inside the victim's vagina about one inch after picking her out of the bathtub. The defendant also described his thumb slipping inside the victim's vagina about one inch while tickling her, claiming that it had slipped inside the elastic band of her underwear and into her vagina. During this interview, detectives traced the defendant's hand, and the defendant marked on his finger and on his thumb how far he had penetrated the victim's vagina.

At trial, the now seven-year-old victim testified that the defendant had touched her vagina on more than one occasion when he was alone with her. The victim testified that

Subject: Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Press Release, State v. Stuckley, 1531-CR05336-01

she knew she could trust her grandmother, and that she felt comfortable telling her grandmother about the abuse. The victim's grandmother testified that the victim recalling how the defendant threatened to kill the victim if she told anyone what he had done to her.

At trial, the defendant testified that his digital penetration of the victim's vagina was accidental and he received no sexual gratification or arousal from doing so. The victim's mother (who has since married the defendant), testified that she had taught the victim to report whenever there was "stranger danger", and because the victim had never done so, nothing could have happened. The defendant's wife/victim's mother also testified that she did not believe the defendant had ever touched the victim's vagina, despite the victim's testimony and the defendant's admission at trial.

The jury returned guilty verdicts against Stuckley for the crimes of statutory sodomy in the first degree, and child molestation in the first degree. The jury deliberated for approximately three and a half hours before returning its verdict. The jury trial was presided over by The Honorable Thomas Mountjoy. The defendant waived jury sentencing opting to be sentenced instead by the judge. Judge Mountjoy set a sentencing hearing for January 19, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. following a sentencing assessment report by the Department of Probation and Parole.

Prosecutor Patterson stated this case illustrates how sexual abusers are more often someone that the victim likes, loves or lives with, rather than a "stranger danger" and how family members may struggle in acknowledging abuse. Prosecutor Patterson applauds the victim's grandmother who intervened on the victim's behalf after observing signs of possible abuse, even when the victim's custodial parent refused.

This case is being prosecuted by First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Chapman and Senior Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Mel Myears. It was investigated by the Greene County Sheriff's Office and Detective Blaine Kennard was the lead investigator assigned to the case.