



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOSTER FATHER FOUND GUILTY OF SEXUALLY ABUSING CHILDREN

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Mark D. Obrien, 42, of Republic, MO was convicted today by a Greene County judge of statutory sodomy in the first degree, statutory sodomy in the first degree, abuse of a child, statutory sodomy in the first degree, statutory sodomy in the first degree, statutory sodomy in the first degree, and statutory sodomy in the first degree for sexually abusing three of his foster children between 2007 and 2010 following a four day bench trial before the Honorable Calvin Holden.

All three of the defendant's victims testified about their sexual abuse at trial. One of the victims also described being forced to sleep outside at night, without blankets or shelter. He described seeking out the dog to sleep with for warmth. Each of the victims had been placed in the defendant's home as foster children and were abused while at the defendant's home. At the time of the abuse, two of the children were under the age of 12 and the third was 14 years old. Two of the victims described being offered bribes or rewards in exchange for the abuse. The third described an attempt to push the defendant away from him when the defendant touched him. None of the children disclosed until they were out of the defendant's home. The abuse came to light in 2010 when the defendant sought out one of the victims despite the child's parents' attempts to sever contact between the defendant and the victim. The victim disclosed the meeting to his parents and then subsequently disclosed the abuse. The two other victims came forward during the subsequent police investigation.

Each child discussed why he did not tell about the abuse. One victim testified that he did not realize that the abuse was wrong and that he believed that the sexual abuse was just "what foster fathers or fathers did." Another victim testified that he was intimidated by the defendant's size. The final victim testified that the defendant told him that he would never see his mother again if the victim told. All three testified that the defendant specifically instructed them not to

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tell about the abuse. Ashley Weaver, a forensic interviewer with the Child Advocacy Center, testified that children often keep abuse a secret and that, commonly, it took children years to tell someone about abuse and that, sometimes, children never tell about abuse.

Detective Michael Costello of the Republic Police Department testified that he seized and analyzed the defendant's computer. During his analysis, he found that the defendant was surfing pornographic websites that featured men who resemble boys, that he searched for "boys masturbating" and "nude 16yo boys", and that the defendant had child pornography. Detective Costello also found that the day the defendant had been notified of the investigation into the abuse, the defendant downloaded software to scrub his hard drive and that he had run the hard drive scrubber two days before the police executed a search warrant on his home. He also found that the defendant attempted to delete his internet history on the same day.

The defendant testified in his own defense and denied the allegations. The defendant also called several character witnesses who testified that they knew the defendant to be truthful, of good moral character, and a law-abiding citizen. In closing arguments, the State asked the judge to disregard the character witnesses and drew comparisons to the Jerry Sandusky/Penn State case noting that Jerry Sandusky held a good reputation in the entire Penn State community despite his years of systematic abuse of children. The State further noted that sexual abuse is something that happens behind closed doors and shrouded in secrecy, so while the defendant's outward façade was good, it did not accurately reflect what he was doing to his foster children behind closed doors.

In announcing his verdict, the Court noted that the children were consistent, had been consistent in their disclosure in four years, and had no motive to lie about the abuse. Judge Holden further noted that children often disclose some abuse initially but continue to disclose further abuse as time goes on, and just because children describe more abuse than they disclosed initially, they are not necessarily lying.

For each conviction of statutory sodomy in the first degree, the defendant is facing a range of punishment from ten years to life in the Missouri Department of Corrections. For the conviction of abuse of a child, the defendant is facing a range of punishment from one year to seven years in the Missouri Department of Corrections. After he announced his verdict, Judge Holden revoked the defendant's bond and took the defendant into custody. Judge Holden set a sentencing hearing for 10/23/2014 at 2:30 PM following a sentencing assessment report by the Department of Probation and Parole.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Stephanie Wan and Jake Kohut. It was investigated by the Republic Police Department and Detectives

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Mark Wilcox, Michael Costello, and Greene County Deputy Bryan Smith were the lead investigators assigned to the case.

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