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Local News

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Former Roloff supervisor gets probation

Unlawful restraint conviction also carries fine, public service

By Guy H. Lawrence
Caller-Times


Smith

The man who was convicted of unlawful restraint for punishing two youths by requiring them to dig a hole all night and run through brush barefooted was sentenced Thursday to a year probation and 150 hours of community service.

District Judge Rose Vela sentenced Allen Lee Smith, a former supervisor at the Lighthouse youth home, to probation and community service, and assessed a $1,000 fine and all court costs. Also, as a condition of probation, Smith will have to earn his high school equivalency and is prohibited from supervising youths.

Smith faced as much as a year in prison for each Class A misdemeanor.

The Lighthouse is operated by the People's Baptist Church and Ministries, and is also referred to as the Roloff Homes, after its evangelical founder, Lester Roloff.

As he left the courtroom, Smith said he was relieved he was not sentenced to jail, but wouldn't comment further.

A jury on June 5, found the former Roloff Homes supervisor guilty of two misdemeanor counts of unlawful restraint. The state had sought felony convicitions.

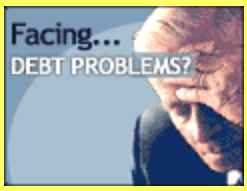
Defense attorney Grant Jones said he was pleased with the judge's decision.

"I think it is a fair sentence," Jones said.

Prosecutor Michael McCaig said he was not disappointed







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with the sentence, even though he had asked the judge for 10 days of jail time for Smith.

"I think the important thing is that the jury found Allen Smith guilty, so I am not disappointed," McCaig said.

McCaig said the guilty verdict should send a message that the treatment to which Smith subjected the youths is not acceptable.

Aaron Cavallin, 18, and Justin Simons, 20, accused Smith of tying their wrists together and forcing them to run through brush and placing them in a deep pit.

The case focused nationwide attention on the distinction between strict discipline and abuse at the Lighthouse, a home for troubled young men.

People's Baptist Church officials testified that punishments ranging from running laps to digging holes are handed out regularly for minor infractions such as waking up late. But Simons and Cavallin also said beatings were a form of punishment, an accusation officials of the home said was untrue.

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