

For Immediate Release

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Jury Finds Rossville Man guilty of Aggravated Child Molestation after Short Deliberation

State of Georgia v. Edgar Charles Neely 21CR0181 Press Release

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On Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Edgar Charles Neely, a 41 year old man from Rossville, Georgia was convicted by a Walker County jury for the charges of Aggravated Child Molestation and two counts of Child Molestation. The evidence, presented over the course of a three day trial, presided over by Judge Don W. Thompson, showed that Neely, who was a longtime friend of the victim's mother, began sexually molesting the victim when she was only 14 years old and Neely was 37 years old.

Neely had known the victim for many years and began showering her with an unusual amount of time, attention, and gifts shortly before she turned 15 years old. Neely established a closeness with the victim by referring to himself as her godfather and inviting her to spend weekends with him and his wife at their home. Neely began attending church services with the victim's family as well. This process of establishing closeness and giving a child gifts, time, and attention is known as "grooming" and is a common tactic used by child molesters to gain access to their victims. Neely began engaging in sexual acts with the victim shortly before her 15th birthday, in February 2020, and the activity continued into April of 2020, when the victim disclosed that the defendant had been molesting her after her mother observed a semen stain on the victim's bedsheets. The victim's mother and father confronted Neely, and he attempted to justify the semen stain by saying he had been masturbating to the victim's high school band pictures while in her room.

During the course of the three day trial, testimony against the defendant was given by multiple members of the victim's family, a friend of the victim, a church leader, and Neely's ex-wife. The victim in the case bravely took the witness stand to confront Neely about the abuse he inflicted on her. Two forensic biologists from Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab provided testimony, as well as members from the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Children's Advocacy Center, including Senior Forensic Interviewer Holly Kittle.

After an hour of deliberations, the jury returned a verdict of guilty. Immediately after the verdict was returned, Superior Court Judge Don W. Thompson sentenced Neely to serve life in prison plus an additional 20 years. The State of Georgia was represented by Assistant District Attorney Deanna Reisman. ADA Reisman was assisted during trial by victim advocate Cindy Clark and trial assistant Ashlyn Landes. The case was investigated by Detective Lieutenant Ira Taylor with the Chickamauga Police Department.

District Attorney Arnt praised the efforts of Law Enforcement and the Prosecution team. "This case is another example of how we prioritize the prosecution of those that abuse and harm our children. My office takes a firm stand against child sexual abuse. We are pleased that this child molester will be behind bars and not able to harm any other children."

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