

Press Release

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Walker County Man Convicted of Child Molestation

May 24, 2023 – Lafayette, GA – On May 24, 2023, Stewart Arra Kelley was convicted of four counts of Child Molestation and three counts of Sexual Battery Against a Child Under the age of 16 by a Walker County jury following a two-day trial before the Honorable Judge Brian House.

In February of 2020, the Walker County Sheriff's Office responded to a report made by the wife of the Defendant where a distant relative had asked her if she knew her husband was a child molester. During the investigation, law enforcement discovered that the eldest daughter of the Defendant and stepdaughter of the wife, had disclosed to this relative she had been sexually assaulted by the Defendant from the ages of 10-16. The eldest daughter did not feel safe to disclose this abuse she had suffered at the hand of her father until she had moved away from the home. Detective Zach Simpson with the Walker County Sheriff's office was assigned the case to investigate. He located and conducted an interview of the eldest daughter, now a young adult, in which she disclosed to him the sexual abuse her father had perpetrated on her during her childhood years.

During this time, the Defendant and his wife elected to separate and it was only a few days after he moved from the home their four year old daughter disclosed she had been sexually assaulted by the Defendant. Detective Zach Simpson scheduled a forensic interview with Senior Forensic Interviewer Holly Kittle at the Children's Advocacy Center. In that interview, the Defendant's four-year-old daughter disclosed that her father had sexually assaulted her in a similar manner in which he had sexually assaulted his eldest daughter.

Over the course of the two-day trial, both daughters of the Defendant testified as well as individuals to whom they had disclosed their sexual abuse. The Defendant made the claim that the allegations were fabricated by the eldest daughter under the influence of her stepmother in an attempt to gain advantage in their divorce and child custody proceedings. The Defendant further claimed the four year old daughter must have mistaken her perpetrator as her mother's new boyfriend. The jury rejected both of the Defendant's claims and chose to believe his two daughters' brave outcry.

The State of Georgia was represented by Senior Assistant District Attorney Lynsay Chapman. The assistance of Administrative Staff Keshia Simpson, Victim Advocate Donna Howell and Chief Investigator Christy Smith was crucial in ushering justice in this case.

On June 20, 2023, the Defendant was sentenced to 45 years of probation with the first 25 years to be served in confinement. "Children should never be in danger, but we all know monsters exist who will commit unspeakable sexual crimes on children and leave unseen scars on these victims forever. The victims' courage in coming forward, the professionalism of the Walker County Sheriff's office, and the hard work and trial acumen of Senior ADA Chapman and her trial team ensured that this Defendant was found guilty" said District Attorney Clayton M. Fuller.

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