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PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville— A Madison County jury convicted an Alton man this afternoon on 2012 criminal sexual assault charges following a two-day jury trial at the Madison County Criminal Justice Center in Edwardsville.

Opening statements began on Wednesday, April 13th, 2016, in the case against James A. Steele (d.o.b. 9/22/67) who was charged with two counts of Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault of a Child (Class X Felony) on May 8, 2013, for acts that occurred in December 2012. The victim was 5 years old at the time of the assault. The jury deliberated approximately 90 minutes before returning a guilty verdict on both counts against Steele who had been in a relationship with the child's mother at the time.

Officers from the Alton Police Department began their investigation after the allegations were reported by the victim's mother. Assistant State's Attorneys Kathleen Nolan, head of the Children's Justice Division, and Ali Foley presented medical evidence during the trial, including DNA, to support the State's charges against Steele.

Following the reading of the verdict, Associate Judge Neil Schroeder revoked the defendant's bond, pending sentencing. Steele will remain in custody at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville where he has been held since his arrest in 2013. Sentencing will occur following the completion of a pre-sentencing investigation that usually takes 6-8 weeks. Normal penalty range for a Class X Felony conviction is 6-30 years in prison, however, Steele may be eligible for an extended sentence of 12-60 years due to the circumstances of the case.

State's Attorney Tom Gibbons thanked the jurors for their service. "The evidence in cases involving the sexual assault of children is extraordinarily graphic and difficult to hear. I want to thank each juror for their willingness to undertake this challenging task, and for their commitment to justice for our community," said State's Attorney Gibbons. Additionally, he conveyed his appreciation to the Madison County Child Advocacy Center and all of the medical and scientific personnel whose work on this case aided his office in obtaining the guilty verdict against Steele. "Working together, the State's Attorney's Office's Children's Justice Division, local law enforcement, the Child Advocacy Center, and so many other dedicated professionals are all fighting every day to secure justice for victims. I hope that this result will aid in the healing process for this little girl who showed such bravery in coming forward and disclosing the heinous assault by the defendant. She is a role model for other victims who may be afraid to report their abuse. We pray that her bravery will give hope to other victims who may be suffering in silence." Gibbons noted that his office will seek a very lengthy prison sentence for Steele.

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