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PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville—The State's Attorney's Office announced that 29-year-old Wood River resident Kassidy Kueper has pleaded guilty to Criminal Sexual Abuse, a Class 4 felony.

Kueper was accused in 2011 of inappropriately touching two different victims when he worked as a camp counselor at the YMCA in Edwardsville. In the first case, filed April 29, 2011, Kueper was charged with intentionally touching the breast and thigh of a 9-year-old female victim during summer camp. The second case, filed June 6, 2011, involved an 8-year-old female victim who also attended summer camp. She came forward following the initial charges against Kueper and prosecutors charged him with intentionally touching her buttocks.

The defendant was set for trial on Monday, June 11th. He pled guilty today to Criminal Sexual Abuse, a Class 4 felony. He received 2 ½ years probation, the maximum allowed, and is required to undergo sex offender counseling and treatment while having no contact with the victims. Kueper will also be required to register as a sex offender. Furthermore, his felony conviction will permanently prohibit employment as a teacher or other work involving children.

Prosecutors discussed the benefits of accepting Kueper's plea with the family in advance noting the significance of the felony conviction and sex offender registration and their consequences. Additionally, the children will not have to testify about the abuse in open court, an often distressing experience for young victims. The families understood and were supportive of the decision. Likewise, prosecutors pointed out that even if Kueper was convicted at trial, there was no guarantee of prison time as probation is presumed when the defendant has no criminal history.

The father of one of the victims stated he was satisfied with the outcome of the case. More than anything, he wanted to ensure that Kueper would never be able to harm another child again and that he will now be a convicted sex offender. Further, he stated his support of the plea because his daughter would not have to testify at trial, an experience he said would make her feel like a victim all over again.

"These sorts of cases require my office to balance the needs of the family and victims with the realities of criminal prosecution," stated State's Attorney Tom Gibbons. "We were able to ensure that Kassidy Kueper will no longer be able to work around children and this is important not only for our victims, but also for the community." Gibbons commended the cooperation between the Edwardsville Police Department, his own office and the Edwardsville YMCA.

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