



Astoria man found guilty of child molestation

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

An Astoria man was sentenced Tuesday to 42 years in prison for charges related to child molestation.

Following a four-day trial, jurors found Larry Dean Leach, 48, guilty on four counts of rape in the first degree, four counts of sexual abuse in the first degree and two counts of using a child in display of sexually explicit conduct.

Leach was indicted on the charges in April 2018. Leach worked as a shipwright and frequently traveled around the country to work on different jobs. While working in Astoria, he became friends with the victim's family. The children referred to him as "Papa Larry."

During the trial, the prosecution detailed a history of abuse and rape that started when the victim, who is now 12, was 7 years old.

During her testimony, the victim said she decided to tell her grandmother what was happening because she "didn't want to be afraid anymore."

Astoria police officer Kenny Hansen and Warrenton Detective Tyler Johnston spent several months investigating the case.

"It was a particularly difficult case to investigate, these always are. It was important that the jury saw what (she) went through," Johnston said.

Leach pleaded his innocence throughout the trial and during sentencing.

"I'm just very happy to see the jury see through his pile of lies because it was so extensive. He lied from the time he got up there to the time he got off," District Attorney Ron Brown, who handed the case, said after the jurors deliberated.

Brown called the victim a hero.

"You can't do anything really worse to a child than what the defendant did in this case," Brown said prior to Leach being sentenced. "Rape of a child is as low as it comes. (The victim) has to live with this her whole life and as the court knows, she's doing a great job now and I think she's going to do a great job forever, but she's going to have to be dealing with issues that were thrust upon her by the defendant."

Retired Clatsop County Courthouse Judge Paula Brownhill presided over the case.

"Well, Mr. Leach, you had a pretty good plan," Brownhill said prior to sentencing Leach.

"You found this family that didn't have a lot of money and you integrated yourself into this family in a number of ways, by buying them gifts and paying their bills and remodeling the house that they were living in ... It was a good plan as long as (the victim) was young enough to do your bidding without revealing what you were actually doing. But the problem is you chose the wrong victim. You chose (a victim) who is smart, brave

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Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Standing in his restaurant, Smoked Bones BBQ, chef Phil Spencer holds two turkeys that he plans to cook for the Thanksgiving feast at the Astoria Armory.

On Thanksgiving, a feast and some fellowship

Riverfolk hosts annual meal at the Astoria Armory

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Riverfolk's main focus is to help people who are homeless obtain foundational documents like birth certificates and identification cards. But every Thanksgiving since 2016, the local nonprofit does something extra by hosting a feast at the Astoria Armory.

The event started as a way to offer the homeless a Thanksgiving meal, but last year 300 people attended, most of whom were not homeless.

"It's snowballing into a very fun community event," said Mary Docherty, Riverfolk's founder.

She and her husband, Scott Docherty, organize the feast as a way of "building a bigger table" that integrates different parts of the community that might not otherwise intermingle.

"We'd like to see more single people, more people who don't have anywhere else to go," Scott Docherty said. "We're happy to serve anyone who walks in that door. It makes it a nice atmosphere. It's not a depressing soup kitchen type thing ... it's like a gigantic dining room that you



Hundreds are expected to attend the Thanksgiving meal hosted by Riverfolk at the Astoria Armory.

would be at home. It's awesome."

This year, they have streamlined the event with the help of nearly 40 volunteers and local businesses.

"Rather than go to 20, 30 people to get individual casseroles, I went to the different restaurants and said, 'Hey, can you donate 100 pounds of mashed potatoes prepared and delivered?' And they did," Mary Docherty said.

JBT Lektro Inc., Blue Scorchers Bakery & Cafe, AAA, Columbia Memorial Hospital, Fort George Brewery and Buoy Beer Co. have donated most of the food. Erickson Floral Co. donated flower arrangements for the tables.

"When we first started, we

would have to hand out individual turkeys to friends and they would take them home, roast them, bring them back in the morning. And then we would have a carving station set up, which is a little hectic," Mary Docherty said. "You have people running all over town with turkeys."

Chef Phil Spencer at Smoked Bones BBQ offered to help organize the food.

"This was such a logistical nightmare for us before he jumped in," Scott Docherty said.

This year, Spencer has also offered to cook all the turkeys, mashed potatoes and gravy.

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After a business call, an ICE detention



Gilberto Bermudez-Arciga, who had a North Coast landscaping business, was deported to Mexico in November.

Bermudez-Arciga thought he was meeting a client

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

NEHALEM — In September, Gilberto Bermudez-Arciga said he received a call about an estimate on a landscaping job. He wasn't accepting new clients, but he agreed to meet the caller.

While on his way, he saw flashing lights go off behind him. He realized he had been tricked.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents had been follow-

ing him as he was looking for the address the caller — who he now believes was an ICE agent — had given him over the phone. He said he felt like everything around him was collapsing.

Bermudez-Arciga, 51, was taken to the private Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington. On Nov. 12, he was deported to Mexico, leaving behind his home of nearly 30 years.

His business partner, Tricia Brown, sent letters to their customers on the North Coast notifying them that Gil & Trish Landscape in Nehalem would close.

Bermudez-Arciga said the call from the ICE agent

came days after his misdemeanor trial ended in Clatsop County Circuit Court. Jurors found him guilty of driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and recklessly endangering another person.

According to ICE, Bermudez-Arciga has previous drunken-driving convictions.

ICE also said he was caught entering the United States four times between 2006 and 2009. "Each time he was allowed to voluntarily return to Mexico rather than be detained for

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