

Former Seaside surgeon acquitted of sex abuse charges

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A jury acquitted a former Seaside surgeon on Dec. 19 of sex abuse charges following a six-day trial.

Robert John Gustafson, 49, now of North Dakota, was accused in 2015 of sexually abusing a girl while he lived in Seaside. He faced 10 counts of first-degree sex abuse alleging that, between 2009 and 2011, he repeatedly touched a girl under 14.

Now 18, the young woman testified for five hours during the trial. A video of a 2015 interview with the girl, soon after she disclosed the alleged abuse to her mother, was also played at trial. She asserted that the defendant had touched her inappropriately.

"I didn't know what it was at the time," she said during the 2015 interview. "It was uncomfortable. I didn't like it."

Arguments from Chief

Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown included a letter written by the girl around the time of the alleged abuse, the fact that the girl was allegedly cutting herself as a result of the abuse and the manner in which Gustafson allegedly tried to hide the abuse.

In July, Judge Cindee Matyas granted part of a defense motion to exclude evidence regarding Gustafson's past sexual tendencies.

"Most of the time, sexual abuse is committed in secret. It's committed against children, particularly, because children are easy to manipulate," Brown said to the jury during closing arguments. "The younger the person is, the harder it is for a person to tell, I submit."

Gustafson also testified during the trial. He denied all of the accusations.

"What I was trying to do is figure out how she could have misapprehended that," Gustafson said. "It wasn't

until later that all of the, sort of, contradictions and stuff became clear, that there was some amount of deception."

Paul Hood, Gustafson's Portland-based attorney, pointed to a number of minor inconsistencies in witness testimony and the logic of the allegations. He also said that a civil case involving the girl's mother and Gustafson, which was filed soon before the abuse allegations were brought to light, might have been a factor.

"I'm not trying to tell you that any one of these things, by itself, is a slam dunk," Hood said. "Is her testimony so reliable that you can reach that incredibly powerful conclusion? And the answer to that is 'no.'"

Moments after the verdict was read, Hood placed his arm around Gustafson, while the young woman and some of her family members looked down and quietly started to cry.

Transportation District grows South County presence

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Transportation District will seek to expand their profile with a new move from the Seaside Outlet Mall to 39 North Holladay, the former home of the Seaside Downtown Development Association.

For the past three years, the district has been renting kiosk office space in front of Rue 21, Sunset Empire Transit District Executive Director Jeff Hazen said Wednesday.

The transportation kiosk is staffed weekdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

With the lease coming up, the district sought a new location.

"Where we're going to be on Holladay, that's going to have good food traffic," Hazen said. "We see the potential of reaching out to the tourists here. If they do come by car, leave they can leave their at the hotel. On



R.J. Marx

New location of the Sunset Empire Transportation District in Seaside.

the weekends during the summer, the streetcar will run down there, and we can give good information on that."

Staffing is yet to be determined, he said, with five-day a week service in the off-season and seven-day coverage in the summer months.

The office plans to offer bus tickets, passes, schedules and information. Monthly passes, which had previously been sold by bus drivers, must be purchased at the Seaside location or the Astoria transit center.

"It's very cumbersome for bus drivers to sell a bus pass," Hazen said. "They need to focus on safety and keeping the bus on time as much as possible."

Along with Seaside, Cannon Beach is a traditionally strong market for the district, he said. "Cannon Beach is very, very supportive of public transit, obviously with all the parking issues, they actually help pay for the service and we expand our service in the summertime. It's a good partnership."

SEASIDE POLICE LOG

Dec. 14
4:26 a.m., Bus stop and Seaside Cinema: Subjects using the bus stop as a bedroom were advised of an ordinance about Littering Near a Waterway; they decided to move on.

8:17 a.m., 12th Avenue and Seaside Cinema: Transients using the bus stop as a shelter were advised of complaints against them and ordered to clean up their mess and move along.

Noon: 12th and Necanicum: A couple dancing in a public restroom to blaring music were asked to leave.

12:47 p.m., 200 block S. Holladay: A man asking restaurant customers to please buy him food is trespassed from the establishment.

Dec. 15

4:28 a.m., 700 block 15th Avenue: A subject is arrested and charged with unlawful possession of a weapon with intent to use.

Dec. 16

11 p.m., Cemetery: A person who told police they were collecting firewood from fallen branches was advised of the cemetery hours and advised to leave.

Dec. 17

5:06 p.m., 3400 block Highway 101: A dog impounded by Gearhart police is transferred to the kennel in Seaside.

Dec. 18

4:51 p.m., Mill Ponds and Public Works: A subject is arrested on a warrant and also charged with giving false information to police.

Dec. 19
8:20 a.m., 1300 block S. Roosevelt: Police respond to a report of a dog running loose in a parking lot. Police are unable to locate.

10:02 a.m., 2000 block S. Downing: Report of a small dog running loose. Police are unable to locate.

10:14 a.m., Second and Necanicum: Caller reports subject using a drone in violation of city ordinance. Officer contacts drone operator and advises them of the requirement to check in with the Public Works Director due to proximity to the city's municipal airport. Subject packs up and leaves with drone.

11:34 a.m., Ocean Shore: Teens are advised of high surf danger after being reported swimming.

Dec. 20

12:41 a.m., 10th Avenue: A burglary is reported.

10:39 a.m., 800 block 10th Avenue: A death is reported.

Dec. 21

7:43 p.m., 1300 block Second Street: Caller says her roommate is telling her to get out; an hour later, police return to advise the roommate (male) of the eviction process.

Dec. 22

4:10 p.m., 800 block Necanicum: A found debit card is turned in to police.

Dec. 23

8:37 a.m., Police headquarters: A sex offender comes in to register.

1:50 p.m., 800 block Avenue M: Police assist with a child accidentally locked in an apartment.

Dec. 24
12:50 a.m., 2100 block Lewis and Clark: A subject is charged with criminal trespass and burglary.

4:46 p.m., Avenue S bridge: A subject reported sleeping under the bridge is advised he is in a no-trespassing zone.

Dec. 25

6:29 a.m., 1000 block S. Downing: A homeless subject wearing a red coat is reported sitting in a chair by the laundry room of a residential complex; subject said they were looking for a covered place in case of rain. They are advised to leave.

Dec. 26

7:04 p.m., 500 block Beach Drive: A person is arrested and charged with menacing; unlawful possession of a weapon

with intent to use; and resisting arrest.

Dec. 27

4:44 a.m., 12th Avenue Bridge: A person flagged down a police officer to report a female who said they intended to self harm. Police were unable to locate.

1:38 p.m., Mill Ponds: A burnt trash can located in a forested area known to be used by transients is removed by Public Works.

5:39 p.m., 400 block Avenue P: A person is charged with criminal mistreatment in the first degree as well as theft in the first degree.

9:21 p.m., Avenue U: A person is arrested and charged with driving under the influence of intoxicants.

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DINING

- Best Asian Food _____
- Best Bakery _____
- Best Bar _____
- Best Barista _____
- Best Bartender _____
- Best Breakfast Spot _____
- Best Brewpub _____
- Best Burger _____
- Best Catering _____
- Best Chef _____
- Best Clam Chowder _____
- Best Coffee _____
- Best Dessert _____
- Best Fine Dining _____
- Best Fish & Chips _____
- Best Food Cart _____
- Best Happy Hour _____
- Best Lunch Spot _____
- Best Mexican Food _____
- Best Pizza _____
- Best Restaurant for Kids _____
- Best Server _____
- Best Wine Bar _____
- Best Wine Shop _____

ACTIVITIES

- Best Birdwatching Site _____
- Best Cheap Date _____
- Best Farmers Market _____
- Best Golf Course _____
- Best Hiking Trail _____
- Best Local Festival _____
- Best Local Sports Team _____
- Best Museum _____
- Best Music Venue _____
- Best Neighborhood Park _____
- Best Place for a Walk _____
- Best Tourist Attraction _____

BUSINESSES

- Best Antique Store _____
- Best Apartment Complex _____
- Best Art Gallery _____
- Best Automotive Shop _____
- Best Barber Shop _____
- Best Bookstore _____
- Best Bud _____
- Best Car Dealership _____
- Best Customer Service _____
- Best Dance Studio _____
- Best Day Spa _____
- Best Florist _____
- Best Garden Center _____
- Best Gift Shop _____
- Best Grocery Store _____
- Best Gym _____
- Best Hair Salon _____
- Best Home Improvement Store _____
- Best Hotel _____
- Best Local Physician _____
- Best Live Theater _____
- Best Radio Station _____
- Best Real Estate Business _____
- Best Seafood Market _____
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