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News

OHS teacher and husband charged in sexual assault of teenage girl

by CJ Carnacchio

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An Oxford High School teacher and her husband, a registered sex offender, were arraigned Thursday in Independence Township 52-2 District Court in connection with the alleged sexual assault of a 16-year-old Oxford girl who did odd jobs around their home and was considered a friend.

"They took away something from me as a father that I can't get back," said the victim's dad. "My little girl - she's in bad shape right now, real bad shape. We have to get her help. She needs help desperately."

William Arthur Keely, 64, of Brandon Township, is charged with three counts of child sexual abuse activity, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison; one count of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct (a two-year misdemeanor); and one count of furnishing obscene material to a child (a misdemeanor).

"The charges are absolute nonsense," said defense attorney Richard Rosenberg, who's based in Pleasant Ridge.

He was also charged with four counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm, a felony which carries a five-year sentence, and four counts of being in possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony, which has a mandatory two-year sentence attached, if convicted.

A total of 20 guns (handguns, shotguns and rifles), many of them loaded, were seized from Keely's home along with a harpoon and a stun gun, the latter of which is illegal to own.

His wife of 30 years, Margaret Keely, 53, is charged with failure to report child abuse, a misdemeanor punishable by up to 93 days in jail.

She is a special education teacher at OHS and has been employed with the district for 27 years. The victim was not one of her students, according to sheriff's officials.

Neither of the Keelys said very much as they were brought before District Judge Dana Fortinberry in shackles. A not guilty plea was entered for both as the victim and her family watched the proceedings from the audience area.

Keely, who was remanded to Oakland County Jail in lieu of a \$6.5 million bond - \$500,000 for each of the 13 counts against him.

Fortinberry set a high bond given Keely's status as a convicted sex offender and her concern for the safety of the public, the victim and any witnesses.

"I just wanted to stress just how in fear the family of the victim is and the victim's friend who was initially brave enough to bring this complaint forward to the sheriff's office," said Sheriff's Det. Chris Pacholski, of the Brandon substation.

Rosenberg argued for a much lower bond (\$50,000, 10 percent) citing the fact that there was no violence involved in the

allegations, "just touching."

"If you take the complaint at face value, that's all that happened," the defense attorney said. "He's not going to pursue anybody. He's not going to go anywhere. Nobody has to be protected from him."

Margaret Keely's bond was set at 10 percent of \$10,000 and she's not allowed to set foot on OHS property.

"I will not allow her to return to Oxford High School while this case pends," the judge said.

The victim, who attends OHS, was introduced to Keely by his wife during the girl's freshman year in 2006. She was 14 years old then.

"(Margaret Keely) has asked her to come over to do odd jobs, kind of be a laborer around the house," said Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard, during a press conference following the arraignment,

Over the next two years, the victim worked at the couple's home on Hummer Lake Rd. at least every weekend. The couple befriended the girl and gained her trust, according to the authorities and the victim's parents.

Then on June 26, Keely invited the victim over to his home to watch a movie together. He then allegedly sexually assaulted her by touching her private areas and trying to put his hands down her pants.

Bouchard said Keely told her things like "your body wants it."

The victim screamed, fled the home and drove away. Margaret Keely was reportedly not home when this incident occurred.

The victim told a friend what happened and this person notified the sheriff's department. Keely was arrested and jailed June 30.

Prior to this incident, Keely allegedly paid the victim to test and rate various sexual arousal devices "under the ruse" that she was being employed by a company that wanted to research how they worked. This testing was done in a bedroom at Keely's home.

"There were a number of situations she was put in by him," Bouchard said.

According to Undersheriff Mike McCabe, "dozens" of sexual arousal devices were seized by sheriff's investigators as evidence and will undergo forensic and DNA testing at the state police crime lab.

He also allegedly showed the victim pornographic materials on the computer. Sheriff's investigators seized five computers from Keely's home and more charges could be levied depending on what's found.

Bouchard said this "more bizarre stuff" started back around April. "It escalated pretty quickly," he said.

A prime example of how the system "let down the victims and let down their community as a whole" is how Bouchard characterized this alleged crime.

"Sex offenders are typically prolific," he said. "They typically repeat their offending and we have another victim."

Bouchard said that's exactly what happened in this case.

Back in April 2001, Keely was convicted by a jury of four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison, after his 14-year-old foster daughter reported having sexual intercourse with him.

Despite the jury's guilty verdict, Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Edward Sosnick set aside the conviction and ordered a new trial.

According to former Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Mary Mara, who tried the case, the first trial put a such tremendous emotional and mental strain on the young victim that she didn't wish to testify again.

As a result, an agreement was reached whereby in September 2002, Keely was allowed to plead no contest to four counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

For this, he served 10 months of a one-year sentence in county jail and was put on probation for two years. His probation ended in September 2004.

Keely was placed on the state's sex offender registry in May 2001 and must stay on that list for the rest of his life.

"Clearly, this person shouldn't be on the streets," Bouchard said. "(He) shouldn't be in a position to have another victim in the future."

But the sheriff was even more bothered by Margaret Keely's role in this situation.

"What's especially disturbing is the acquiescence and enabling, if you will, of the spouse to bring a child into a house with a convicted sex offender. What have we come to," Bouchard said.

Margaret Keely's alleged failure to report the alleged abuse was another example of how the system let the victim down.

She's mandated to report this by law as a teacher, as someone who's "supposed to be an advocate, the protector of children," Bouchard said.

"Clearly, she had a duty to report what was going on and frankly, from my point of view, to intervene, but that didn't occur," he said. "I wish we could charge her with more."

The victim's father said that Margaret Keely "exploited" and "manipulated" his daughter by bringing her into the home of a convicted sex offender and introducing them.

"She (the wife) was the draw. She was the lure. She was the bait on the hook," he said.

The victim's father said outwardly, the Keelys appeared to be "trustworthy" and "honest" people who went to church "anywhere from two to six days a week."

"It was nothing but a con. We believed them," he said. "We're just as much at fault as what that sick person is because we trusted them."

“You got to keep your guard up. You got to watch your kids. You got to hang on to them.”

Oxford Superintendent Dr. Bill Skilling said he was contacted about the incident by sheriff’s department Wednesday afternoon while vacationing in Pennsylvania.

“At this point, it’s real premature because we don’t know a lot about the situation yet, but we are going to do our own investigation,” he said. “We’re going to work cooperatively with the Oakland County Sheriff’s Department.”

Skilling, who started with the district in July 2007, said he was “not aware” that Margaret Keely’s husband was a convicted sex offender and was “surprised” when he heard it.

However, he noted there’s nothing legally or policy-wise that prohibits employing a teacher who’s spouse is a sex offender.

Not hiring or terminating such a person on just that basis alone would be illegal.

“It would be violating that person’s rights to discriminate against them in any way because their spouse has committed some inappropriate act,” Skilling said.

As for what Margaret Keely’s fate will be, Skilling said, “It’s so premature at this point that I really can’t give you a definitive (answer about) what’s going to happen.”

“Maybe nothing, it just depends on that person’s involvement or lack thereof,” he said. “We just don’t know anything yet.”