

Pleasant Ridge Police Chief, six other men accused of 1990 sexual assault

By Katrease Stafford, Detroit Free Press

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[1990 Cops pedophile](#)

Editor's note: Another version of this story listed defendant Michael Bertha's current employment incorrectly. It has been removed.

The police chief of Pleasant Ridge and several other former law enforcement officers are being accused of sexually assaulting a girl 25 years ago while she participated in a program training her to be a police officer.

The woman, now 40, and lawyer Lyle Dickson, filed a federal lawsuit against Pleasant Ridge Police Chief Kevin Nowak, a former Garden City police officer, and six other men, seeking more than \$75,000 in damages.

Garden City is also listed in the lawsuit, which was filed last year.

Garden City police officer Thomas Wallace; Richard Sundstrom, a civilian employee of the police department; Mark D'Onofrio, Garden City police officer; Fred Sayger, a retired detective sergeant; David Harvey, now the executive director of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards; and Michael Bertha, were named as defendants.

The defendants' filed an order on Jan. 12 of this year, seeking to apply the statutes of limitations as a defense, arguing that too much time has passed for the case to move forward. Nowak and the other defendants could not be reached for comment Monday afternoon.

"She didn't really wait to file the lawsuit, for the last 20 or some years, she's been a drug-addicted prostitute," Dickson said. "In her mental condition, she couldn't comprehend her rights to file a lawsuit."

According to the lawsuit, the plaintiff was a member of the Garden City Police Explorer Post — a program that was designed to allow teenagers the opportunity to experience law enforcement as a potential career — from 1989 to 1992.

The plaintiff was 15 when she started the program and 18 when she resigned, according to the lawsuit. She alleges the assaults happened while she was 15 and 16.

In the lawsuit, the woman said she met D'Onofrio in January 1990 while he was on duty, and claims she was sexually assaulted and battered at his home while he was off-duty but "acting under the color of the law."

The lawsuit states that he was later terminated.

The woman says she was also sexually assaulted that same month by Nowak, while he was on duty and in his patrol car at the Garden City Industrial park.

The lawsuit states that Nowak again sexually assaulted her in March 1990 at his home.

From January 1990 through late 1991, she claims in the suit, she was assaulted by Wallace on at least five or six different occasions while he was on duty.

The woman became a drug addict and a prostitute and battled drug addiction through August 2013, due to the emotional and physical abuse, according to the lawsuit.

"Obviously she's devastated," Dickson said. "She has lost the career she always wanted. Her life has literally been destroyed."

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