

METRO NEWS BRIEFS: NEW JERSEY; Union City Officer Is Convicted in Sex Case

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A Union City police officer was convicted of aggravated sexual assault and official misconduct yesterday for having sex with a 14-year-old boy whom he supervised in a mentor program run by the city Police Department, county prosecutors said.

The officer, Raymond Bonelli, 41, of Union City, met the boy, Juan Peralta, in 1991 through the department's Explorers group, a Boy Scout-like organization for young people interested in pursuing law enforcement careers, said Robert S. Lane, an assistant Hudson County prosecutor. Mr. Bonelli became a father figure to Mr. Peralta, who had trouble with his family, and over the course of the year he had sex with the boy at least twice, Mr. Lane said.

Mr. Peralta, now 20, of Woodridge, spoke to a high school counselor about the incidents and decided to press charges even though his relationship with Mr. Bonelli was consensual, Mr. Lane said. Other boys involved with the Explorers group came forward in pretrial hearings to accuse the former officer of having sexually assaulted them as well, but a judge threw out their claims because they had occurred beyond the statute of limitations.

Mr. Bonelli now faces a maximum of 30 years in jail.

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