

## Two molest claims tied to program

Posted: Thursday, August 16, 2007

A woman who complained that a former lawman molested her as a teen is the second participant in a now-defunct Oglethorpe County youth program to step forward to say she was sexually molested by a deputy.

Current Oglethorpe Sheriff Mike Smith said the girl, then 15, participated in the Oglethorpe County Junior Law Enforcement program, also called Explorers, in 2003, when former Oglethorpe deputy Brian Walter Anderson is alleged to have had a sexual relationship with her.

Another deputy in former Sheriff Jason Lowe's administration, Samuel Roy Wilbanks, pleaded guilty to aggravated child molestation in 2004 for having repeated sexual contact with a girl who participated in the ExplorerS program between November 2003 and April 2004. Wilbanks, now 34, was sentenced to 7 years in prison.

Anderson, 26, a University of Georgia police officer for the past two years, was charged Tuesday with child molestation, aggravated child molestation and violating his oath of office.

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Anderson had repeated sexual contact with the girl about 4 1/2 years ago, said University of Georgia Police Chief Jimmy Williamson.

Williamson said he had no indication of any wrong-doing by Anderson while he was a UGA police officer. Anderson resigned Tuesday, the same day he was arrested.

Anderson remained a deputy with the Oglethorpe sheriff's office for about a year after Smith took office, then left voluntarily, Smith said. Smith had no indication of any wrong-doing by Anderson during that time, he said.

Anderson, who lives on Crawford-Smithonia Road near Crawford, is behind bars in a jail outside Oglethorpe County, Smith said.

A bond hearing has not been scheduled in Oglethorpe County Superior Court, he said.

Smith said he did not know if the girl and Anderson met through the Explorer program or if they knew each other beforehand, but he confirmed that she did participate in the program.

Smith said he shut down the ride-along program when he took office in 2005, and the Explorer

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program subsequently ended.

Young Explorer participants were allowed to ride alone with individual deputies as part of the program, which was designed to let young people explore a possible law enforcement career.

Smith ended the ride-along program mainly because of potential liability issues and the cost of liability insurance, but Wilbanks' conviction also was part of his decision, Smith said.

The Explorer program itself withered away through lack of interest, Smith said.

The family of Wilbanks' young victim is suing Oglethorpe County, former Oglethorpe Sheriff Lowe and others in federal court.

According to the family's complaint, Wilbanks met the girl as he worked security at a high school football game and later provided her alcohol and convinced her to have sex with him, in a patrol car while Wilbanks was in uniform and on duty. The relationship continued for months, according to the court documents.

Police have released few details so far of Anderson's alleged crimes, however.

After the victim contacted UGA police about three weeks ago, Williamson contacted Smith and the two agreed that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation should be brought in, Smith said.

Williamson said UGA police and GBI agents investigated the victim's claims for about 20 days before charging Anderson.

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