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Former Columbia County Sheriff's deputy charged with 40 counts of sexual abuse

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By Leslie Slake / The Daily News The Daily News Online | Posted: Monday, May 9, 2011 8:30 pm

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Courtesy Photo John Lawrence Hinkle

A former school resource officer at Rainier Junior/Senior High School was charged Monday with 40 counts of sexual abuse, all involving a single victim now 22 years old.

The crimes are alleged to have taken place between 1999 and 2006, according to Columbia County District Attorney Steve Atchison. The alleged sex acts occurred before John Lawrence Hinkle joined the Columbia County Sheriff's office as a full-time deputy.

Atchison said the prosecution will present its case Thursday to the Columbia County Grand Jury, which will determine if more charges will be filed against Hinkle, 47, of St. Helens.

The allegations came to light after the Oregon State Police began investigating Hinkle in early 2010 on an unrelated allegation of sex abuse involving a former Rainier High School student, Atchison said. He said that investigation remains open.

Hinkle, known as Jack, was the Rainier School District's resource officer from November 2006 through June 2009, while he was on the sheriff's staff.

Oregon State Police detectives arrested Hinkle in Woodburn, Ore., on Friday evening on suspicion of rape, sodomy, sexual abuse and another sex crime, according to news releases from OSP and Atchison's office. Hinkle is in the Columbia County Jail in lieu of \$40,000 bail.

Columbia County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson said Hinkle became a reserve deputy in 2002, joined the department in October 2006, and was put on administrative leave in December 2009 when the department began an internal personnel investigation. Hinkle resigned April 6, 2010.

According to a May 2010 story in the Scappoose Spotlight based on the sheriff's report, Hinkle resigned after the department concluded its four-month investigation into allegations of untruthfulness and misconduct separate from the sex-abuse allegations, which the sheriff was unaware of at the time.

According to the Spotlight story, the internal investigation found that Hinkle lied under oath in a trial, lied to a judge about why he was late for court, issued a citation without probable cause, used profanity in uniform and threatened to take a man to jail if he didn't stop talking. He was not disciplined because he resigned.

OSP Criminal Investigations Division is working in cooperation with the Columbia County District Attorney's Office on the sex abuse investigations.

Anyone who may have information on this case is asked to contact OSP Detective Matt Beeson at 503-325-5515, extension 25.

"We're looking for all the information that we can get," Atchison said.

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