

Ex-cop sentenced for abuse of boy

By Bob Gardinier

Updated 9:53 pm, Friday, July 13, 2012

timesunion.com

QUEENSBURY — A prosecutor told the court Friday that former Albany cop Paul Pierce sexually preyed on a developmentally disabled 15-year-old boy for two years in three counties and then blamed the child after he was caught.

The retired Albany police DARE officer appeared in Warren County Court with his attorney, Andrew Safranko, and was sentenced to four years in prison and 10 years' post-release supervision. He pleaded guilty in April to a third-degree criminal sex act at Pierce's Chestertown camp.

"I want to apologize to my wife, son, sister, mother and all my family members who are here today," Pierce said. "I was a police DARE officer for many years, and I am really proud of that."

Pierce retired in 2002 after 23 years on the force.

Warren County Assistant District Attorney Kevin P. Donlon said Pierce has blamed his victim, who suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome and bipolar disorder, and said the child was the aggressor.

"He preyed on this troubled boy and that's why he was able to get away with this for so long," Donlon told Judge John Hall. "The victim now has trouble talking to people and sometimes just sits by himself curled up in a chair."

The abuse began in 2009 and ended in December 2010, investigators have said.

Safranko argued that Donlon was unjustly painting his client as a predator when he was only charged with abusing one child.

"He's not a Jerry Sandusky," Safranko said, referring to the Penn State assistant coach awaiting sentencing after being convicted of 45 criminal counts for abusing 10 boys over several years. "Besides, where is there a law that says that Paul must stand on a mountain top and tell the whole world what he did?"

Pierce, 59, was then handcuffed, nodded to his family members and was led off to prison.

Pierce, who volunteered for the Albany Police Athletic League and at Albany High School, was found guilty in April in Rensselaer County Court of two counts of third-degree criminal sex act and was sentenced to six years in prison for sex that occurred in Pierce's East Greenbush home.

During that trial, Pierce denied abusing the boy, though he admitted he may have acted inappropriately around the boy's under-aged sister while camping in Chestertown.

The boy's father testified at that trial that the family had a meeting to confront Pierce with the allegations.

The father said Pierce at first denied their allegations, so the family members brought the boy into the room.

The father said his son "sat up straight, looked him right in the eyes and asked him why he was not telling the truth. Paul finally said, 'I did that,' and said he had been molesting the boy for two years. He was crying and his face was all red."

Three weeks after his Rensselaer County conviction, Pierce pleaded guilty in Albany County Court to two counts of third-degree criminal sex act, a felony, and faces up to six years in prison for sexual contact with the same boy at an Albany home, according to District Attorney David Soares. His sentencing there is pending.

All the sentences are to run concurrently.

bgardinier@timesunion.com • 518-454-5696 • @BobGardinier

•