

## Former corrections officer sent to prison for sex with teen

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**STAUNTON** — On Nov. 13, Brian Peduto, a one-time prison guard at Augusta Correctional Center, was spared prison time for attempting to have sex with a 12-year-old girl, receiving a five-year suspended sentence in what Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Robin Boylan labeled a "very sweet deal."

Less than three months later, Peduto, 22, was having sex with an underage teen.

Monday in Augusta County Circuit Court, following a revocation hearing, Circuit Judge Victor V. Ludwig sent Peduto to prison for three years.

In July 2012, authorities began investigating Peduto, also a former volunteer firefighter in Churchville, after he began sending electronic messages with sexual content to a 12-year-old girl.

Investigators with the Augusta County Sheriff's Office seized his computer and recovered the messages, according to evidence presented at his November hearing.

Spared prison on the Augusta County charge of taking indecent liberties with a child, on Feb. 8 in Rockingham County authorities charged Peduto with failure to register as a sex offender. He also was slapped with a misdemeanor charge of having consensual sex with a child above the age of 15, prompting Augusta County to schedule the revocation hearing.

In court Monday, Peduto's father, Mark Peduto, said his son was home schooled and blamed that for his child's lack of interaction with others his age. Mr. Peduto said as a teen, his son befriended a boy four years his junior.

"Brian was just hanging around a younger crowd," Mr. Peduto testified.

The father said since being incarcerated in February, his son has grown up and realized that he doesn't want to be behind bars.

"He's become an adult in my eyes," the father said.

Boylan, though, was not swayed, and said

the defendant's actions put him "in flagrant disregard" of the court.

Boylan argued that all of Peduto's suspended sentence of five years should be imposed.

Ludwig said Peduto's having sex with an underage girl was a "challenge to this court, and one that I take up."

He said Peduto's charge with the 12-year-old, and the subsequent case involving the teen in Rockingham, should not be viewed as youthful indiscretion but as "a problem."

Before being sentenced to the three-year term, Peduto apologized and said his time in jail made him realize "it's time for me to stay away from girls in general."