

Ex-sheriff's deputy gets probation

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A former La Plata County Sheriff's Office deputy was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to register as a sex offender Tuesday as the result of a plea agreement in the 6th Judicial District courtroom of Judge Martha Minot.

Jason Sutter was fired April 24, 2013, two weeks after he turned himself in and was arrested for having an estimated 89 photos of child pornography downloaded from the Internet on his personal computer.

The stipulations of the plea bargain – it includes a restraining order to keep Sutter away from his wife and three stepchildren – were agreed on by Deputy District Attorney Christian Champagne and defense attorney Christian Hatfield.

Sutter's wife of 10 years, she's now Celese Kershaw, said she and her children are mentally, emotionally and financially devastated.

"He hid behind his badge very well," Kershaw said in court.

In addition to possessing child pornography, Sutter was suspected of engaging in inappropriate behavior with minors.

The only charge Sutter admitted guilt to in the plea agreement is attempted unlawful sexual contact, a second-degree misdemeanor.

"I wish I had better evidence, stronger evidence," Champagne said. "He knew better, but he crossed a line."

Sutter briefly addressed the court, saying he had "crossed a line," but he denied acting with sexual intent.

Minot told Sutter that the regret he expressed "doesn't offset the hurt you caused."

A Bayfield Marshal's Office agent obtained a search warrant after learning about Sutter's photo porn from someone who had accessed his laptop.

Sutter is a resident of Bayfield.

In a March 20, 2013, interview, Sutter told investigators it was pornography of adult men and women, an arrest affidavit said. He denied having child porn.

The photos were downloaded from the Internet.