



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Diana Becton
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Contact: Scott Alonso, 925-957-8638

scott.alonso@contracostada.org

Former Walnut Creek Middle School Teacher Plead Guilty to Child Molestation and Sentenced to 25 Years to Life in Prison

Martinez, Calif. – On September 27, 2018, Michael Bartel, a 34-year-old resident of Martinez and former teacher plead guilty in Contra Costa County Superior Court to four counts of child molestation. By his guilty plea, Bartel admitted that between May 14, 2016 and November 3, 2017, he engaged in lewd and lascivious acts with minors under the age of 13. In addition, Bartel admitted during this time frame, he victimized more than one minor. The Honorable Patricia Scanlon sentenced Bartel to 25 years to life in prison. Bartel has been in custody since his arrest on November 3, 2017. He will begin to serve his sentence immediately in state prison.

In late October 2017, a witness from the east coast called the Martinez Police Department to report an individual believed to be Bartel had disclosed in an online forum he was engaged in hands on sexual activity with minors. The witness provided substantial detail leading investigators to suspect Bartel was in the fact the person making the online statements. Soon after, the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force became involved with the investigation and an undercover police officer engaged Bartel in the same online forum. During those online conversations with the undercover officer, Bartel agreed to meet the officer in anticipation of traveling to a location in Contra Costa County to engage in sex with a minor. On November 3, 2017, Bartel arrived at a predetermined location and was arrested. A search of his cell phone revealed Bartel was in possession of child pornography and that he had distributed the images as well. The ICAC Task Force investigation did not involve any of Bartel's current or former students.

On November 6, 2017, Bartel was charged in Contra Costa County Superior Court with multiple counts of sex offenses involving minors and child pornography possession and distribution.

Deputy District Attorney Jay Melaas prosecuted the case. The investigation was conducted by the Martinez Police Department and the Silicon Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, which is managed by the San Jose Police Department. In Contra Costa County, detectives and investigators from the Walnut Creek, Martinez, San Ramon, Concord and Moraga Police Departments, Homeland Security Investigations, the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, Contra Costa County Probation Department and Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office participate in the ICAC Task Force.

Case information: People v. Bartel, Docket Number 05-180937-5

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