

Reno Gazette-Journal

Former washoe teacher wanted on abuse charges

Sexually Abuse Children
By Lenita Powers/Gazette Journal
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A former substitute teacher for the Washoe County School District was free on bail Wednesday, awaiting extradition on an out-of-state warrant for child molestation.

Edward Courtney is charged with two counts of molesting a child under the age of 14. The charges stem from two separate incidents that occurred in 1985 while he was a teacher and coach at a junior high school in Othello, Wash.

Courtney, who was a substitute teacher for about three months in Washoe County, will face the extradition hearing Monday in Reno Justice Court.

Deputy District Attorney Karla Butko said no local charges have been filed against Courtney, who was a counselor with the Job Corps in Stead before joining the school district.

"A fugitive warrant from out of state is all we have," Butko said.

Courtney left Washington before parents alleged their children were molested, and the charges were not filed until 1987, said Richard Miller, prosecuting attorney for Adams County, Wash.

Othello, located 130 miles southwest of Spokane, has a population of about 4,000.

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Abuse suspect

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James Junger, superintendent of the Othello School District, refused to comment on the case.

Courtney was substitute teaching at Vaughn Middle School in southeast Reno when "questions about his moral character" were raised by a concerned parent, according to Marvin Moss, Washoe school district superintendent. Courtney was taken off the substitute teaching list Dec. 18, Moss said.

A routine check of Courtney's fingerprints and references had turned up nothing of concern, allowing him to be placed on the substitute teacher list in September, Moss added.

But after questions about Courtney were raised, school officials checked again and found out about the outstanding warrant, Moss said.

Aside from the one parent's warning, which did not involve allegations of sexual molestation, Moss said he has heard of no complaints or incidents involving Courtney and Washoe County students.

MOSS SAID he believes the school district's background checks for employees are stringent enough.

"We check former places of employment and they were all OK. We also do an FBI check of fingerprints. We've done this for years on all our employees. He had no previous arrest record and no convictions."

Prior to becoming a substitute teacher with the school district, Courtney was employed as a counselor with Sierra Nevada Job Corps in Stead.

Roy Adams, director of Job Corps, said he doesn't know how long Courtney worked for the program.

"Mr. Courtney was here a very brief period of time. I don't know if he was here 30 days. I don't have the personnel records here, but we never had any complaints about him."

Adams said Job Corps checks with previous employers listed by an applicant and requires proof of educational background.

"We do not conduct any sort of criminal background check independently. I don't think that's a bad idea, however, but we are a private company operating under contract with the Department of Labor," Adams said. "All our personnel policies and procedures have to be submitted and approved by the Department of Labor."