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Terry and James Muller

Pike couple convicted of child abuse

Wed, 12/06/2017 - 1:35pm

MILFORD, PA — Terry Muller, 51, and James Muller, 64, of Greentown were convicted of various counts related to child abuse against their adopted daughter on December 1. The charges included unlawful restraint, false imprisonment and endangering the welfare of a minor.

The couple adopted the girl along with her two brothers in 2013. When the brothers left the home in 2015, the couple began mistreating the girl, who was then 14 years old. On December 21, 2015, police were called to the house because the girl was missing. Police searched the house and found a number of conditions that concerned them. There was a padlock on the girl's closet door as well as an alarm on the door to the room, which the couple said was to alert them if the girl left her room or opened her door.

There was no furniture in the girl's bedroom; instead there was large clear sheet of plastic covering the floor. The girl later told authorities she had accidentally urinated on the floor because she was not allowed to go to the bathroom by herself but instead had to be escorted by Terry or James.

Police also found a dummy camera in the bathroom, and locks on all of the medicine drawers and cabinets.

The girl was found the next day standing in freezing temperatures. She told authorities that she had been pushed outside by Terry, who was angered about her urinating in the bedroom. Terry locked the door behind her. She said James let her back in after about 20 minutes.

Terry then came into the room and began hitting her, and eventually knocked her to the ground. At one point Terry pinned her to the ground, and as the girl struggled to get free of the woman's grip, Terry bit her on the back, leaving a mark.

Terry then once again forced the girl outside and the girl realized she needed to leave the home, and she did. After finding the girl outside, she was taken into protective custody.

Police got a search warrant in for the home in February 2013, and seized multiple items including Terry's smartphone. In text messages exchanged with her daughters, she said the girl had nothing to sleep on, although a full bedroom set was found in the garage. At one point she also texted that the girl was "in her jailhouse."

Senior Deputy District Attorney Sarah Wilson, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the Pike County District Attorney's Office, said, "The fortitude and bravery of the victim to escape from her abusers and strength to then testify to her years of mistreatment resonated with the jury and resulted in this guilty verdict on all counts."

Wilson said that a multidisciplinary team approach to investigating this case was taken, which included cooperation between the Pike County District Attorney's Office, Pennsylvania State Police, Pike County Detectives, Children's Advocacy Center and Pike

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After the guilty verdict was announced, acting President Judge Gregory Chelak granted a motion to revoke the Mullers' bail. They both remain in custody at the Pike County Correctional Facility and sentencing is scheduled to take place on December 14, 2017 at 9 a.m.

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