

Former daycare owner sentenced to six years in prison

Ebony Horton
ehorton@dothaneagle.com

A former Ariton daycare owner found guilty recently of sexually abusing a 4-year-old girl at his daycare will serve prison time, despite a plea claiming he was innocent.



Darrell Snellgrove

Dale County Circuit Judge P.B. McLaughlin Jr. denied probation and sentenced Darrell F. Snellgrove, 64, to six years in prison, Chief Assistant District Attorney Bill Filmore said. Snellgrove had been the co-owner of Sandy Creek Daycare on County Road 221 in Ariton for more than 25 years before it closed last year.

He was arrested in January 2006 after a four-week investigation requested by the girl's mother, who became suspicious of wrongdoing after comments the girl had made. He was charged then with first-degree rape and first-degree sexual abuse, but only found guilty of first-degree sexual abuse.

The girl, now 5, was called to testify in the case.

Filmore said the district attorney's office sought the maximum sentence of 10 years.

"... The mother of this 4-year-old victim didn't know these people, but since they were in the business of childcare, she paid money to this daycare for them to care for her little girl. Instead of being cared for this defendant sexually abused this child," Filmore wrote in an e-mail.

Filmore said Snellgrove was denied probation based on the fact that all 12 jurors found him guilty.

He was, however, granted an appeal bond of \$50,000, which allows him to remain out on bond pending an appeal.

Snellgrove told the *Dothan Eagle* during a telephone interview last year that he was not guilty of abusing the girl. The charges were the first ever filed against him.

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