

Sex-trafficking case involving local victims brings federal charges

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ST. PAUL — A man originally charged in Olmsted and Anoka counties with promoting prostitution has been charged in federal court with sex trafficking of a minor for a case involving two area girls.

The file against Lee Andrew Paul, 34, was unsealed Tuesday.

As reported in the Post-Bulletin in August 2013, the charges stem from an incident in May 2013, when two girls — one from Kasson and one from Rochester — were together when one of them received a text asking them to a party.

The girl thought the text was from someone she knew; the two girls agreed to be at a Rochester business for their ride to the party.

It was Paul who picked the girls up late that night, then took them the next day to a motel in Columbia Heights. According to the complaint, Paul told the Kasson girl he was a pimp, then told her to perform a sex act, "or you and I are going to go for a little ride."

The victim told investigators she took the comment to mean he was going to kill her. She then was assaulted. She didn't agree to work as a prostitute, nor did she participate in any other acts of illegal sex, the complaint says.

Later that day, Paul also sexually assaulted the 12-year-old girl from Rochester, the complaint says, and also confronted her about her age, saying she could "get him in trouble if she was really only 12 years old."

During the night, police were called to the motel for an incident in another room; Paul apparently got spooked and moved the group to a motel in Maple Grove.

The case broke later that day when a detective with the Anoka-Hennepin Drug Task Force overheard the Kasson girl ask a hotel clerk for a phone to call police and intervened. The detective confronted Paul, who fled in his SUV.

The detective was able to see the SUV's license plate as Paul fled, and authorities eventually put out an attempt to locate the vehicle, the complaint says.

Early the next day, the Alexandria Police Department located the vehicle, conducted a traffic stop, issued a citation to Paul and towed the vehicle. Paul was released at the scene.

About 3:30 a.m. that day, officers went to a home in Alexandria, where they found Paul; a woman from Alexandria who was helping Paul; and the Rochester girl, who told officers the two were attempting to prostitute her, the complaint says.

Paul was charged in May 2013 in Anoka County with one count of promoting prostitution of an individual under 18 years old and one count of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, both felonies related to the Kasson girl.

He was charged in August 2013 in Olmsted County District Court with one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct; one count of solicit-under 18 years old to practice prostitution; and one count of aiding and abetting the promotion of prostitution-under 18 years old. Those charges are related to the Rochester girl.

Paul listed a Rochester address on the Anoka County District Court document, although charges in Olmsted County District Court list him with a Bloomington address.

The Alexandria woman was also charged in August 2013 in Olmsted County District Court with one count of felony promotion of prostitution-under 18 years old.