

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



SUSAN K. TREADAWAY
Acting District Attorney

Cherokee County Justice Center
90 North Street, Suite 390
Canton, GA 30114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cyndi Crossland
Public Information Officer
cbcrossland@cherokeega.com
770-479-1488

Former Lyndon Academy science teacher pleads guilty to child molestation
State vs. Robert Allen Vandel

March 10, 2023 – Acting District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on March 9, 2023, Robert Allen Vandel, 65, of Canton, entered a negotiated guilty plea to two counts of child molestation involving a middle schooler who attended Lyndon Academy in Holly Springs, Georgia.

Vandel, who previously taught science at the school, admitted to intentionally making physical contact with intimate parts of the child’s body, including pressing the front of his body against the child and smacking her buttocks with a ruler.

Superior Court Judge David Cannon, Jr. sentenced Vandel as negotiated to 20 years, with the first 8 years to serve in prison and the balance on probation under sex offender special conditions.

Vandel first came to the attention of Cherokee County law enforcement in September 2021 after he was arrested in Roswell for a sexual assault that occurred the previous year in a Fulton County school.

Since Vandel was at that time a teacher in Holly Springs, at Lyndon Academy, Holly Springs Police Department initiated a separate investigation. A 7th grade student at Lyndon Academy submitted to a forensic interview, which revealed that Vandel had been showing the child favoritism and giving her answers to test questions, which ultimately progressed into criminal acts.

“Mr. Vandel engaged in acts of methodical and manipulative grooming in order to begin the process of victimizing this child through the introduction of sexualized touches,” said Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper. “These acts were part of a predatory playbook he had developed and used over time. Fortunately, through the courage of his victims and the involvement of law enforcement, his behavior was stopped before it escalated further in Cherokee County.”

During the plea hearing, the victim delivered an impact statement, describing sleepless nights, feelings of betrayal and fear, and waiting for justice. “I’m always thinking about what happened to me and what could’ve happened to me if he wasn’t caught,” she said.

Vandel pled guilty to his Fulton County charges in May 2022, admitting to rape, aggravated child molestation, false imprisonment, and child molestation. He was sentenced to 10 years to serve in prison followed by life on probation with sex offender special conditions. The Cherokee County sentence is concurrent to the Fulton County sentence.

“We are so proud of the bravery of the young victim who spoke about the impact of these criminal acts on her life. We want to assure her, and all victims, that we will remain steadfast in our commitment to seeking the justice and closure they deserve,” said Acting District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “Though these acts caused deep wounds that will take time to heal, through this sentence, children in our community and beyond will be protected.”

This case was investigated by the Holly Springs Police Department. Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper handled the prosecution. The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

Sexual Abuse of Children

Child abusers often engage in a grooming process that allows them to perpetrate sexual abuse undetected. “Grooming” in the context of child sexual abuse is a manipulative process intended to secure the child’s silence. Common characteristics of the grooming process include targeting the child, gaining the child and caregiver’s trust, filling a need, using flattery and gifts, isolating the child, sexualizing the relationship, and maintaining control.

Children who have been groomed are often conflicted about their feelings for the abuser because he/she has methodically established a positive relationship with the child prior to introducing sexual touches. Children who have been groomed are also more likely to conceal the abuse and delay disclosing the abuse to others.

To report suspected child abuse, call Child Protective Services at 855-422-4453. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911.

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