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PAUL PEIRCE



While “Mean Girls Day” is being marked Wednesday in reference to a mention of Oct. 3 in the popular 2004 cult movie, the parents of a former Seneca Valley High School student claim in a federal lawsuit filed this week that their teenage son was terrorized by false accusations made by five “mean girls” at the school.

Michael J. and Alecia Flood of Zelienople, Butler County, the parents of a teenage boy identified in the lawsuit as T.F., seek unspecified civil damages against the girls’ parents, the school district and Butler County District Attorney Richard Goldinger’s

office. The lawsuit, which includes the term "mean girls," alleges they "conspired in person and via electronic communication devices to falsely accuse T.F. of sexual assault on two occasions."

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Neither Goldinger nor Seneca Valley school officials returned calls seeking comment.

The 26-page lawsuit — filed in Pittsburgh on the eve of Mean Girls Day — alleges that T.F. "was forced to endure multiple court appearances, detention in a juvenile facility, detention at home, the loss of his liberty and other damages until several of the girls reluctantly admitted that their accusations were false" this summer.

The lawsuit contends T.F. was bullied on multiple occasions by classmates. In one example, the lawsuit said students last year placed masking tape with the word "PREDATOR" written on it on his back without his knowledge during choir practice.

The lawsuit alleges the boy was further damaged from "gender bias" by school officials and Goldinger's office, which even after learning the girls' accusations were false "did not take any action against the females involved," said attorney Craig Fishman of Pittsburgh, who represents the Floods.

"(T.F.) was basically being tortured in school by the other students and investigators, but the administration was only focused on protecting the girls who were lying," Fishman said. "Once the allegations were proven false, they really didn't care one bit about T.F. and there has been absolutely no repercussions against the girls."

The teen boy is being home-schooled, Fishman said.

According to the lawsuit, the first allegation occurred in July 2017 at an area swimming pool where T.F. worked as a lifeguard with then Seneca Valley High School graduate Megan Villegas, who is the only teenage defendant named in the lawsuit. The others are minors and are referred to only by initials, Fishman said.

Villegas could not be reached for comment.

The lawsuit contends T.F. was charged with sexually assaulting a girl identified in the lawsuit as K.S. on the pool premises, and Villegas corroborated the K.S. claim by saying she was present during the alleged assault.

"T.F. was fired at the pool," Fishman said.

In a tape-recorded interview with school officials in 2017, the lawsuit alleges K.S. said she made the sexual assault claim against T.F. because "I just don't like him."

"I just don't like to hear him talk. ... I don't like to look at him," K.S. reportedly disclosed in the recorded interview obtained by Fishman.

On Oct. 2, 2017, K.S. told fellow students "that she would do anything to get T.F. expelled ... and accused T.F. of sexual assault" with school officials, the lawsuit states. T.F. was subsequently charged in juvenile court with indecent assault and two counts of harassment.

The Floods eventually agreed in late 2017 to a consent decree where he would not admit guilt but was required to stay out of trouble for six months and report to the county probation department.

In March, another girl — identified as C.S. and a friend of K.S. — reported to a school counselor that the boy had walked into her home uninvited and sexually assaulted her. The allegations were supported by information from two other girls, identified as E.S. and H.R., according to the lawsuit.

On April 9, Zelenople police charged T.F. with indecent assault, criminal trespass and simple assault.

"On April 10, T.F. was removed from class at Seneca Valley High School and placed in leg and wrist shackles by the Jackson Township Police with the assistance of Juvenile Probation Officer Michael Trego," the lawsuit said.

Trego testified at a hearing that T.F. was a threat to the community, and the teenager had to spend nine days in a juvenile detention center before being released on home-electronic monitoring.

"After 28 days, T.F. was only allowed out of his home to mow his lawn," the lawsuit contends.

During the case, T.F. was told by school officials he could not play baseball "because every time he was wearing a Seneca Valley jersey, he was representing a school."

According to the lawsuit, the criminal complaints against the boy began to unravel in May when three of the witnesses admitted they had lied.

On Aug. 30, Goldinger's office sought an order dismissing all charges against T.F. filed for the March allegation because of the false reports, according to court documents. On Sept. 10, the charges in connection with the 2017 swimming pool incident were ordered closed, according to the lawsuit.

“The Butler County District Attorney’s office promised to file a petition to expunge the record of T.F. in September, but has not yet done so, providing further evidence of gender-based discrimination. The (district attorney) has refused to file criminal charges against K.S., Villegas, C.S., E.S. and H.R. due to gender-based discrimination,” the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit claims school officials have repeatedly refused to mark the academic records of the girls who lied about the assaults.

“T.F. has had psychological trauma because of all this. He’s had to see a psychologist to deal with the physical symptoms which are the direct result of being accused of something when he did not do anything wrong,” Fishman said.

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