

Counselor Is Charged

Youth Worker Helped Lover, 17, Flee Detention Center Outing, Police Say

October 02, 2009 | By Nick Madigan | Nick Madigan,nick.madigan@baltsun.com

Police knew just where to find the 17-year-old fugitive from a Baltimore County detention facility. All they had to do was trace a call he made on the cell phone of his lover - an employee at the center.

The boy, a sex offender who had been in custody at a treatment facility in Parkville, fled Monday evening during a sanctioned group outing to a White Marsh movie theater.

As Maryland State Police officials told the story Thursday, the boy made his getaway by hopping into a waiting car driven by Tyra M. Greenfield, a 26-year-old youth counselor. The couple spent the night at her home on Surrey Lane in Nottingham, where they had sex, police said.

The next day, the boy used Greenfield's cell phone to call a relative in Laurel, Del., and she drove him there and dropped him off, police said. Detectives discovered Greenfield's involvement by tracing the call to her phone.

The youth was picked up Wednesday morning at the relative's house by local law enforcement officers at the request of the Maryland State Police. He was taken to the Lower Eastern Shore Juvenile Center, and will be charged with escaping, police said.

Greenfield, who returned home after driving to Delaware, was arrested Wednesday and charged with sexual abuse of a minor and harboring a fleeing felon. She is to appear for a preliminary hearing in Baltimore County District Court on Oct. 30. The Baltimore Sun does not name the victims of alleged sexual crimes.

Lt. James DeWees, commander of the Golden Ring state police barracks, said the circumstances of the escape were surprising.

"Very rarely do you ever think that someone inside a facility like that would go to the lengths that they went to, to assist him in escaping and then harboring and to ultimately be charged with a sex crime at the end of it," DeWees said. "It's a bit shocking."

After her arrest, Greenfield was fired from her job at the New Directions Program, based at the Charles H. Hickey Jr. School in Cub Hill and the only secure treatment facility in Maryland for juvenile sex offenders, said Tammy M. Brown, a spokeswoman for the Department of Juvenile Services.

Brown said the department's inspector general will investigate the escape and Greenfield's involvement with the boy.

The case recalled similar instances of women in their 20s and 30s, often in positions of authority, having sexual relationships with boys in their charge. Seattle schoolteacher Mary Kay Letourneau was arrested in 1997 and ultimately served three years for having sex with a 12-year-old student in her sixth-grade class. Letourneau had his first child while in jail, and then a second one. They later married.

In Temple Terrace, Fla., middle-school teacher Debra Lafave pleaded guilty in 2005 to statutory rape charges after she had sex with a 14-year-old student when she was 23. A 2004 U.S. Department of Education study found that almost 10 percent of students are targets of sexual suggestions or contact by teachers during their school careers. The report said female teachers were responsible for 43 percent of inappropriate incidents.

Instances of sexual misconduct between inmates and staff are increasingly common in federal prisons, according to a Justice Department report cited by Alabama's Birmingham News this week. Adam Lankford, a criminal justice professor at the University of Alabama, told the newspaper that women in positions of power often see nothing amiss with having sexual liaisons with males they oversee.

"They rationalize that they aren't doing anything wrong because of the long history of men being in power when it comes to sex relations," Lankford said. "They don't feel they can be the abuser, and the male victims often encourage it."

The youth in the Greenfield case was startled by the arrival of police officers Wednesday, and bolted out the back door of the Delaware house clutching his socks and shoes, said Sgt. Derrick Calloway, a spokesman for the Laurel Police Department.

"He probably thought that was the last place they'd be looking for him," Calloway said. He added that two officers chased the youth for a couple of blocks before he surrendered to the threat of a police dog.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.