News



by Dan Morris-Young

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The Seattle Archdiocese has agreed to pay $1.3 million to settle a sex-abuse lawsuit that charged church authorities had not only neglected to report a known abuser to authorities, but helped him secure employment in the public school system.

In a release on the website of the Seattle-based lawfirm Pfau Cochran Vertetis Amala, attorney Jason P. Amala stated: “Our law firm has represented hundreds of abuse survivors, but I cannot think of another case where the defendant removed a known abuser from their private school system and then actively helped them get a job in the public school system.”

Listed as “M.R.” in court documents, the plaintiff was a student at now-closed Parkland Elementary School in the Franklin Pierce School District headquartered in Tacoma.

He was abused as a sixth-grader there during the 1981-82 school year by Edward Courtney, a former Christian Brother of Ireland, states a brief August 29 archdiocesan media release.

According to the release, “the bankrupt Christian Brothers” were also named in the suit.

Courtney has a well-documented history of sexually abusing children, and his name was among 77 priests, brothers, deacons and a nun named in January 2016 by the Seattle Archdiocese as having been credibly accused of child sex abuse.

While the settlement closes the suit by “M.R.” filed in 2015, a second suit by a former Parkland Elementary student was filed in 2016 alleging abuse by Courtney during the same period as M.R. That proceeding is ongoing, according to the law firm and news accounts.

According to a February, 2016 Los Angeles Times story, Courtney, who would now be 82, “sold his Seattle-area home in 2013 and signed a sales document notarized in Honolulu. His phone number and address are listed in the Honolulu phone book.”

“According to court records,” the Times reported, “the Catholic schoolteacher was a cross-country serial molester, accused of abusing at least 50 children and teens from New York to Chicago and Seattle over three decades.”

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While admitting “no direct knowledge of the allegations in these lawsuits,” a Sept. 28 statement by the Seattle-area leader of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) said the organization applauded “the two victims who filed suits for pursuing these claims” and underscored the importance of mandatory reporters.

“Mandatory reporters are on the front lines of defending children, and when they fail to do their job, they should be held accountable to civil and criminal law,” stated SNAP’s Mary Dispenza.

In the Seattle archdiocesan statement, Archbishop J. Peter Sartain said he hopes the settlement will bring closure and assist the survivor in his healing process. “The safety of children and all vulnerable populations in our care is our highest priority,” Sartain is quoted as saying.

[Dan Morris-Young is NCR's West Coast correspondent. His email is dmyoung@ncronline.org.]