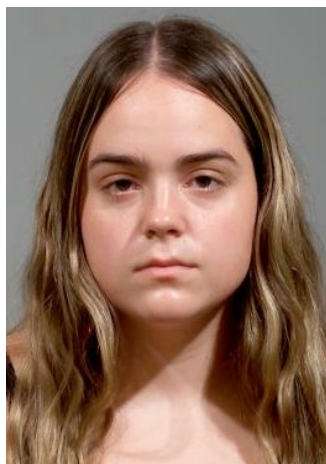


Ex-dance teacher gets prison, labeled sex offender



A former Trumbull County dance teacher on Monday, July 10, 2023, received an prison term of three to four and a half years after being convicted by a jury of gross sexual imposition charges and then pleading guilty to six sexual battery offenses that were part of a plea deal to resolve the six rape charges the jurors could not decide after a May trial in Common Pleas Court.

Kaitlyn Wilkes, 20, of Vienna, also was labeled a tier 3 sex offender by Judge Cynthia Rice. Wilkes will have to register after her release from prison with the sheriff's office for the rest of her life.

Judge Rice said Wilkes would not be able to hold any position of authority as a result of the convictions which resulted from a case involving a 12-year-old dance student who was assaulted five times at four separate sites in Trumbull County between December 2021 and February 2022.

Jurors in May returned guilty verdicts on five counts of gross sexual imposition, three of which were lesser included offenses on rape charges. She was found not guilty on two additional counts of rape and jurors could not reach a verdict on the remaining six counts of rape Wilkes was charged with. On Monday, prosecutors asked for dismissal of the rape counts as Wilkes pleaded guilty to a bill of information charging her with six counts of sexual battery, a second-degree felony.

In other cases before Judge Cynthia Rice:

- Tamar Foreman, 48, an inmate at Toledo Correctional Institution, received an 18-month prison term that will extend his 10-year prison sentence he is presently serving for convictions out of both Cuyahoga and Trumbull counties. Foreman had pleaded to attempted possession of a deadly weapon while under detention. The charge stems from an incident where a correction officer at Trumbull Correctional Institution in Warren found a homemade knife, or shank, on Foreman's person. Foreman told the judge he was carrying the weapon for protection. Judge Rice said consecutive sentence was necessary because of the seriousness of the offense.

- Javier Gonzalez, 37, of Midlothian Boulevard, Youngstown, received a 12-month prison sentence after pleading guilty to one count of receiving stolen property. As part of the plea deal, one count of aggravated possession of drugs against Gonzalez was dismissed. The case involved a Sept. 28, 2022, traffic stop conducted by Liberty police where Gonzalez was investigating a shoplifting offense and the defendant was topped in a vehicle that was determined to be stolen.
- Austin M. Groff, 27, of Warren, pleaded guilty to a fourth-degree operating a vehicle while intoxicated charge and was give three-year probation starting with a 60-day jail sentence. Groff received a three-year driver's license suspension and fined \$1,350 plus costs. He was arrested Nov. 28, 2022, by Niles police who discovered a vehicle "doing donuts" in a parking lot, prosecutors said.

For more information, contact Guy Vogrin of the Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office at 330-675-2485.