

'What Mike did to me'

Vernon Hills pedophile sentenced to 60 years

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WAUKEGAN -- "A parent's worst nightmare" was sentenced Friday to 60 years in prison for six years of molesting boys.

Michael Rebecca, 52, of Vernon Hills was found guilty in September of 20 counts of sexual assault involving nine boys at his apartment. It was a reduction from the 250 counts that followed his arrest in November 2007.

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Rebecca

Rebecca was arrested after one of the victims told police that Rebecca was molesting kids in a so-called "boys club" in the 700 block of Birch Court.

Authorities said Rebecca played sex games with boys who ranged in age from 11 to 17, and bought their silence with gifts of cell phones, money and electronics.

One of the accusers, also known as "Rebecca," was used to lure and recruit other boys into the club, police said.

Authorities suspect that more than 200 sexual incidents occurred at Rebecca's home.

"They were 15, 14 and 13 years old," said Bodie Haxall, Lake County assistant state's attorney. "This was a case about trust. A trust that Rebecca betrayed at every turn."

One of the victims who appeared in court during the sentencing said molestation at the hands of Rebecca and the aftermath turned his life upside down.

"I looked up to him. He was like a father figure to me," the victim said. "Now I am very upset that I have to come to court and tell what Mike did to me."

Defense attorney James Schwarzbach appealed to Judge Theodore Potkonjak to consider the physical and emotional strain Rebecca had been under before the assaults -- the deaths of his girlfriend, brother and having to care for his ailing mother -- before passing sentence.

"Prior to that he had been a law-abiding citizen," Schwarzbach said.

However, Potkonjak did not buy the argument of personal tragedy as catalyst.

"Mr. Rebecca is a parent's worst nightmare," the judge said. "He was the adult. He was the adult."