

TEEN-AGER TESTIFIES AGAINST DRUG-CENTER DIRECTOR

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Two vastly different views of Possibilities Unlimited director George Ross - one portraying him as a humanitarian and the other as a manipulator - emerged yesterday as Ross' unlawful imprisonment trial got under way in Fayette District Court.

While prosecutors vowed to prove that Ross unlawfully restrained five people in the drug treatment program, Ross' attorney spoke confidently about proving that what his client did was not unlawful.

The prosecution's first witness, a 19-year-old former Possibilities Unlimited client, testified that he was restrained physically and psychologically from leaving the program.

██████████ Smalley of Frankfort said that during his first visit to the drug treatment center, he was held for four hours in an interview room and was physically restrained by Ross when he tried to leave.

Smalley also said Ross threatened to get a court order forcing him into the program and told him he would have to serve jail time.

Ross, 36, who founded Possibilities Unlimited in 1983, is charged with five counts of unlawful imprisonment. The charges stem from complaints filed three months ago by five former enrollees, each claiming that Ross had prevented them from leaving the program.

The complaints also name six staff members at Possibilities Unlimited who will be tried later; no date has been set.

Possibilities Unlimited, a drug treatment and counseling center at 2628 Wilhite Drive, is open to those 12 to 25 years old. Participants spend their days at the center and their nights in foster homes.

The Ross trial attracted an unusually large crowd of spectators yesterday, ranging from teen-agers to members of the board of directors at Possibilities Unlimited. After testimony began late yesterday afternoon, the court bailiff turned away would-be spectators because all of the courtroom's approximately 40 seats were occupied.

Smalley, who spent four months in the program, testified that he signed a treatment agreement after Ross threatened him. "I thought there was no other way out," he said under questioning from assistant county attorney Jack Giles.

On the stand, Smalley said he had used marijuana, LSD, hashish, alcohol and assorted pills in moderation since age 14. But he denied that he had a drug problem and said he had been free of drugs for a month before enrolling in the program last Nov. 3.

Defense attorney Larry Roberts questioned Smalley extensively about the stories about taking drugs that Smalley told during the program's group sessions. Smalley said much of what he had told staff members and written in a diarylike journal, called a moral inventory, was lies.

"It's what they wanted to hear. I did it because everybody else was giving a sad story," Smalley said. ". . . I told the truth at times, and when the truth wasn't good enough, I lied."

Smalley said his accounts of how he got high each day before, during and after school were lies. Smalley, who maintained his composure despite rapid-fire questions from Roberts, said he made up things to get "brownie points."

Following Smalley to the stand was his mother, ██████████ Smalley.

Like her son, Mrs. Smalley played down her son's drug problem and any benefits from Possibilities Unlimited.

However, she admitted that since he participated in the program, she had noticed improvement in her son's behavior and his rapport with his family. Before entering the program, she said, he was withdrawn, his high school grades suffered, he skipped school often and kept late hours.

Mrs. Smalley said she was unaware that her son took drugs until last October, when one of his high school teachers told her and suggested she put him in Possibilities Unlimited.

For a misdemeanor case, Ross's trial is unusual in the number of days it is expected to last and the number of witnesses expected to be called. Testimony is expected to last into next week, and as many as 60 witnesses might take the stand. Only two witnesses testified

yesterday. Testimony was to resume at 8:30 this morning.

Unlawful imprisonment carries a possible punishment of up to 12 months in jail and a fine of up to \$500.

Prosecutor Giles, during his opening arguments, said he would ask the jury to recommend a jail sentence for Ross, who patterned Possibilities Unlimited after a similar program he founded in Florida called LIFE. Before coming to Lexington, Ross also had founded another drug treatment program called Kids Helping Kids in Northern Kentucky.

All of the programs rely on young people who have been on drugs helping those who are on drugs.

"Nowhere in this case will you see George Ross or any of his staff do any act that is unlawful restraint," Roberts told the jury. "We're going to prove to you that nothing unlawful was done. Nothing."

In addition to Smalley, the other complainants, each of whom will testify, include a 23-year-old woman who alleges that Ross threatened to have her 2-year-old baby taken from her if she didn't enroll in the program; a 15-year-old boy who alleges that Ross threatened to have him hospitalized and get a court order placing him in the program; a 16-year-old boy; and a 19-year-old Frankfort teen-ager who alleges that three Possibilities Unlimited workers came to his home and carried him back to the center after he had been allowed to leave. He later was questioned by Lexington police officers but denied that he was being held in the program against his will.

Said Giles: "He stayed there because he feared more what might happen to him if he left."

- Caption: PHOTO MUG George Ross
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