

## WOMAN SAYS THREATS USED IN DRUG PROGRAM

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- Author/Byline: Thomas Tolliver Herald-Leader staff writer
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A young Lexington woman testified yesterday that she was held in a local drug rehabilitation program under threats that she would lose custody of her 2-year-old daughter if she left.

And a 15-year-old Powell County boy said he was held in the program even after his aunt and uncle, who had gone to court to become his guardians, pleaded with the center's director to release him.

The testimony came during the second day of the trial of George Ross, director of Possibilities Unlimited, a drug treatment program for teen-agers and young adults.

Ross, 36, who founded Possibilities Unlimited in 1983, is on trial in Fayette District Court, charged with five counts of unlawful imprisonment. The charges stem from criminal complaints filed against Ross in late May by five former participants in the program, all of whom claimed they were restrained by Ross, either physically or psychologically, from leaving the program.

██████████ Hodgins, 23, of Lexington, who was taken to Possibilities Unlimited by her parents, said she agreed to enroll last Sept. 22 after Ross told her that he would get a court order forcing her into the program and that he could cause her to lose custody of her daughter.

"He said he'd see to it that I would never see Ashley again," Ms. Hodgins testified.

██████████ Bellamy, 15, of Clay City said he once ran away from the program only to be turned over by his parents to a Powell County deputy sheriff who returned him to center.

"I tried to get him to take me to the detention center but he said I hadn't broken any laws," he said from the stand.

"Why didn't you want to go back?" a prosecutor asked.

"Because I hated PU," ██████████ said, referring to Possibilities Unlimited.

Ms. Hodgins and ██████████ were the second and third plaintiffs to testify. The other two are expected to take the stand today.

During cross-examination of ██████████ and Ms. Hodgins, defense attorney Larry Roberts focused on their lifestyles before and after they entered the program. Both said they were able to free themselves of drugs and to re-establish relationships with their families.

Roberts says that none of the five was held in the program illegally. He asked Ms. Hodgins if anyone ever grabbed her to prevent her from leaving. She said that no one had.

Possibilities Unlimited is a treatment program where young people who have successfully whipped a drug dependency problem help counsel those still dealing with such problems. The program has been praised by many parents whose children have gone through it, but it has remained controversial because of its treatment philosophy.

During the first phase of Possibilities Unlimited's five-part program, newcomers spend their days at the center on Wilhite Drive and their nights under extremely close supervision in the homes of foster parents. The foster parents must agree to bolt all windows and doors in their homes to prevent their charges from fleeing.

They also are not allowed to read, make telephone calls, listen to music, watch television or participate in any other recreational activity. A program veteran walks behind each newcomer, holding to his or her belt.

Ten witnesses took the stand yesterday, including Ms. Hodgins' mother, ██████████ Hodgins. She said she and her husband paid \$10,800 to put two of their daughters in the program.

The father of another of the enrollees told of taking a second mortgage on his home to pay the \$4,400 it cost to enroll his son.

Unlawful imprisonment is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to 12 months in jail and a fine of up to \$500.

Testimony was to resume when the trial reconvened at 9 this morning. Prosecutors said they expected to wrap up their case today. The defense would begin presenting its case Monday.

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