

## JURORS TO GET CASE AGAINST DRUG CENTER DIRECTOR

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A Fayette District Court jury will be asked today to decide whether George Ross, the founder and director of a Lexington drug-rehabilitation center for young people, illegally forced some clients to remain in the program.

After seven days of testimony, which ended yesterday, the case is expected to go to the jury after closing arguments this morning.

Ross testified yesterday and denied that he had restrained two teen-agers and a young woman from leaving the Possibilities Unlimited program.

However, Ross, who spent nearly six hours on the stand, acknowledged that restraint is used sometimes, but only as a last resort.

Ross is charged with three counts of unlawful imprisonment stemming from criminal complaints filed by three former enrollees in the program. ██████ Hodgins, 23, of Lexington, and ██████ Smalley and ██████ Mullins, both 19 and both of Frankfort, contend that Ross used physical and psychological restraint to hold them in the program against their wills.

Each of the charges is a misdemeanor and punishable by up to 12 months in jail and a fine of up to \$500.

Ross testified that he knew nothing about a Feb. 24 incident in which Mullins was carried forcibly from his Frankfort home and brought back to the Possibilities Unlimited headquarters in Lexington until more than a week after it happened.

Ross, who earns \$60,000 a year as clinical director of Possibilities Unlimited, denied that he

threatened Ms. Hodgins with losing custody of her young daughter if she left the program. Although he acknowledged telling Ms. Hodgins that losing her baby was a possible consequence if she left, Ross said he merely was reinforcing an ultimatum imposed by her parents.

Ross, who has a doctorate in education, took the stand soon after court convened at 8:30 a.m. He spent the first two hours outlining in detail his background, how he became involved in the treatment of teen-age substance abusers and how Possibilities Unlimited came to be.

It was 10:45 before defense attorney Larry Roberts began questioning Ross about the specific charges against him.

"I didn't learn about the ██████ Mullins incident until the following Monday," Ross said. "I found out about it when I got back (from vacation), and when I did learn about it, I hit the roof because that was wrong."

Ross said none of the three boys who went to the Mullins home and brought Mullins back was on the staff of Possibilities Unlimited. They were clients in the program, he said.

As for the two staff members who sent the three boys to Mullins' home, Ross said he "chewed them out royally." He said he also told them, "That's the kind of situation that could close this program down."

In questioning Ross about the incident, prosecutors attempted to show that he was in charge of the staff and ultimately responsible for its actions.

During cross-examination, Assistant Fayette County Attorney Phillip Moloney questioned Ross about allegations that the three complainants were threatened with being forced into the program by court order and the possibility of jail if they left it.

Ross said he was merely explaining to them the consequences of leaving. He said he did not consider the remarks as threats.

"I would outline the consequences of what the parents were willing to do," Ross said. "I would outline the hazards that can happen to them if they choose not to seek treatment."

Moloney, who questioned Ross for 2 1/2 hours, also asked Ross about the way he determined whether a young person had a drug problem.

Ross said it took him only 10 minutes to make that determination in ██████ Smalley's case; 15 minutes in ██████ Mullins' case and three minutes in the case of ██████ Hodgins. He said he had talked extensively with their parents before meeting the children.

Moloney criticized Ross for failing to administer any kind of psychological test before making his determination. But Ross said such tests were not needed. It also was unnecessary to seek a second opinion, he said, even though Smalley's parents told Ross they did not think their son had a drug problem.

After the defense rested its case about 3:30 p.m., prosecutors called three rebuttal witnesses who disputed Ross' claim that parents were never encouraged to nail their windows shut to prevent youngsters from fleeing during the night. Prosecutors have contended that such measures constituted restraint.

- **Caption:** PHOTO Herald-Leader/Ron Garrison GEORGE ROSS testified that he did not restrain teen-agers, woman in program.

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