

## DRUG-TREATMENT WORKERS ARRAIGNED ON CRIMINAL CHARGES

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The director and six other employees of Possibilities Unlimited were arraigned yesterday on charges of unlawful imprisonment in connection with their handling of participants in the drug treatment program.

Among the allegations leading to the charges were claims that participants were held in locked rooms against their will and were sometimes threatened with arrest or institutionalization if they left.

Possibilities Unlimited, 2628 Wilhite Drive, is a drug rehabilitation and counseling center for drug users up to age 25 and their families.

During the district court arraignment, attorneys for program director George Ross and the six asked for a jury trial on the charges. Judge Julia Tackett obliged and set a pretrial conference for June 11. A trial date will be set then. Tackett entered not-guilty pleas for each of the defendants.

Ross, who turns 36 today, is charged with five counts of unlawful imprisonment, a Class A misdemeanor. Each count carries a penalty of up to 12 months in jail and a fine of up to \$500. Each of the six staff workers - [REDACTED] Powell, [REDACTED] Powell, [REDACTED] Polkamp, [REDACTED] Haggerty, [REDACTED] Edwards and [REDACTED] Fleming - is charged with one count of unlawful imprisonment.

The charges stem from criminal complaints filed earlier this month by parents of some of those enrolled in the program and some of the participants themselves.

Ross was present at the arraignment and was represented by attorney Larry Roberts. After the arraignment, both Ross and Roberts declined to comment on the allegations.

"It would be inadvisable and highly unprofessional to make any comment until it's had a full hearing in court," Ross said after his arraignment.

Ross went on to say that the program was still in full operation.

In one of the complaints, a mother said she went to Possibilities Unlimited to get her son out of the program and was told that she could not have him. The mother went on to say that Ross threatened to have her son taken away from her permanently. Through the assistance of her attorney and Lexington police, the mother says she was able to gain custody of her son.

In another complaint, a participant in the program said that Ross restrained him by threatening that he would be arrested by police and placed in a mental institution if he left.

Another complaint filed by a participant in the program said that on March 3 he was forcibly restrained and placed in a vehicle, held in the back seat, and transported to Possibilities Unlimited. He said he was then dragged out of the vehicle and forced into the building where he was held down for about an hour. He said he received a cut on one hand and a sore shoulder and leg during the incident.

A female who was enrolled in the program said in a complaint that she was locked in a room and physically restrained from leaving the premises under threats that officials would take her child from her on grounds she was an unfit mother.

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