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PRESS RELEASE

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RICHFIELD MAN SENTENCED FOR TAMPERING WITH WITNESS, CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT

The Richfield man found guilty of Aggravated First Degree Witness Tampering, Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Third Degree, Threats of Violence, Domestic Assault, Possession of a Controlled Substance, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, and Possession of a Small Amount of Marijuana, by a Redwood County jury on January 18, 2018 was sentenced to 11 years in prison, Redwood County Attorney Jenna Peterson announced Tuesday.

Charles Earl Strother, 40, was found guilty after a three day jury trial in January 2018 for the rape and assault of a female victim that occurred in August 2017. His attorney and Peterson both presented argument to the Court about the proper sentence. The State asked for Strother to be sentenced to a total of 160 months or more than 13 years for the offenses he committed.

Ultimately, Redwood County District Court Judge Patrick Rohland sentenced Strother Monday morning to 48 months for the Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Third Degree conviction and 86 months for the Aggregated First Degree Witness Tampering conviction, to run consecutively, for 134 months or more than 11 years in prison.

The victim and her mother both presented victim impact statements which were read to the court at the hearing by a New Horizon's Crisis Center victim advocate. In her statement, the victim's mother wrote, "People think that when the accused is arrested and you go to court and the accused is found guilty and he goes to jail that everything is all done. But in reality it's not done at all. You have months and maybe even years of counseling to get through the sleepless nights and the worries of someone finding you and hurting you."

Peterson called the sentence a good, long prison term for the rape and traumatic experience not only the victim endured, but her entire family. Peterson said she argued for the consecutive sentences so that he would spend a long time in prison in the hopes the victim would feel she was getting the justice she and her family deserved.

"The sentence handed down today was especially significant as April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month," Peterson said. "It's important for victims to know their voice has power. It's important for victims to know they do not have to suffer alone, that if someone assaults you, we will prosecute the perpetrator and, if successful, seek a long prison term."

According to the victim impact statements and the criminal complaint, the sexual assault in this case spanned the course of one week in early August 2017. The defendant hit the victim and raped her numerous times during that week. He brought drugs into her home and threatened to kill her and her children if she told anyone. The victim was eventually able to escape Strother by fleeing from her home with her two children and contacting law enforcement.