

NEWS RELEASE

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Crimes Against Persons Team convicts 6 during trial week

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Crimes Against Persons Team tried two defendants and convicted five others who pled guilty this week in Mecklenburg County Superior Court. The trials were held in courtrooms 5150 and 5370 before The Honorable Yvonne Mims Evans and The Honorable Thomas H. Lock, Superior Court Judges.

Brandon Brooks, 24, was tried for 1) robbery with a dangerous weapon and 2) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. The jury returned verdicts of *guilty* on both charges. Judge Evans sentenced Brooks to 55-78 months in prison.

Darryl Whiteside, 25, was tried for 1) robbery with a dangerous weapon and 2) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. The jury returned verdicts of *not guilty* on both charges.

The State called Heath Gerard, 25, for trial on six counts of third-degree sexual exploitation of a minor. The trial began May 6, 2013, before Judge Evans. Gerard filed a motion to suppress computer evidence seized through a search warrant. After more than a day of testimony and arguments by the State and the defense, Judge Evans denied the motion. Gerard then *pled guilty as charged* to six counts of third-degree sexual exploitation of a minor. Gerard was sentenced to 25-30 months in prison. After his release from prison, Gerard must register as a sex offender for 30 years. In December 2009, an undercover investigation revealed that Gerard, a student at UNC Charlotte, was engaged in sharing child pornography. Detectives executed a search warrant at a residence where Gerard lived. His computers were seized and multiple images of child pornography were found on his computer.

Four defendants pled guilty before their cases were called for trial:

Stephen Tatum, 32, pled guilty to sexual activity by a custodian. Judge Lock sentenced Tatum to 17-30 months in prison. After his release from prison, Tatum must register as a sex offender.

David Rivera, 19, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. Judge Lock sentenced Rivera to 20-33 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending Rivera's successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. As one of the conditions of his probation, Rivera must serve 247 days in the Mecklenburg County jail.

Marvin Wilson, 32, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Judge Lock sentenced Wilson to 17-30 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending Wilson's successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation.

Jonathan Edwards, 30, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Judge Evans sentenced Edwards to 12-15 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending Edwards' successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. As one of the conditions of his probation, Edwards must serve 30 days in the Mecklenburg County jail.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA

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