

Published: May 11, 2007

Local News: Winnebago County

\$2.2M deal OK in church sex-abuse suit

Mark Campobello, jailed in 2004, was ministering in Geneva and Aurora at the time of the incidents.

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ST. CHARLES — The Catholic Diocese of Rockford has agreed to pay \$2.2 million to two women who were sexually abused by then-priest Mark Campobello when they were teenagers.

The settlement will cost the diocese \$500,000. Insurance will cover the rest. Diocesan spokesman Penny Wiegert said she believes the diocese will get the money from reserves.

The agreement ends the case for the victims but does not close the books on the diocese's handling of Campobello, said Jeff Anderson, a St. Paul, Minn., lawyer who represented the women. He is negotiating with the diocese over release of documents he believes show that the diocese ignored warning signs that Campobello was dangerous.

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There were clear indications, reports if not complaints, about this guy before the abuse of either of these girls occurred, he said. The diocese didn't heed them or follow its own policies.

Anderson said he will return to court, if necessary, to force making those papers public because public disclosure of a sin would make the diocese much less likely to repeat the Campobello scenario.

The diocese and Anderson reported the settlement to a Kane County judge Thursday. Anderson said the agreement was reached earlier this week.

The women brought the lawsuit against the diocese after Campobello was sentenced to eight years in prison for sexually abusing them. Campobello agreed to a plea bargain in which he admitted to one case of assault against each woman when they were teens. The abuse occurred in 1999 while Campobello was a priest in a Geneva parish and assistant principal and spiritual adviser at a Catholic high school in Aurora.

In June 2001, Campobello came to St. James Parish in Belvidere, where he was serving at the time of his arrest in December 2002.

One of the women will get \$1.15 million; the other, \$1.05 million.

Asked if the diocese believes the settlement is fair, Wiegert responded yes.

A press release posted on rockforddiocese.org said: Although the settlement amounts were a heavy burden for the diocese, the diocese owed restorative justice to the two women for their injuries.

The Rockford Diocese reaffirms its pledge and commitment to ensure a safe environment for children and young people in its churches and schools, and restates its special care for and commitment to reaching out to victims of sexual abuse.

The attorney for the diocese was not available for comment.


Anderson said the women, now in their 20s, have sought professional help to deal with what happened.


□They both are relieved to have this behind them, but they still struggle with depression, anger and relationship issues,□ he said. □They have reclaimed their power by reporting this to police and holding the diocese accountable, and they are on the road to recovery.□

Campobello has been in the Illinois River Correctional Center since June 2004. The diocese reported in the release on its Web site Thursday that the Vatican expelled him from the priesthood on June 3, 2005. He is eligible for parole in February 2008.

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