

June 1, 2007 - MISSOURI Lawsuits Continue to Make News Locally in Clergy Sex Abuse Cases
Webster-Kirkwood Times

The clergy sexual abuse scandal continues to touch the local area, with new lawsuits and news stories being filed throughout 2007.

Earlier this month, a St. Louis County court heard arguments in the case of Bryan Bacon, a graduate of Vianney High School who claims that in 1985 he was molested by a teacher, Marianist Brother William Mueller.

Bacon, a Kirkwood resident, filed a lawsuit against Mueller, Vianney and the Marianist Order. Bacon's lawsuit is one of several that have been filed across the country involving Mueller, who has taught students in Pueblo, Colo.; San Antonio, Tex.; and St. Mary's High School in St. Louis, where he served as the principal from 1981 to 1983.

Bacon's lawsuit accuses Marianist officials of knowing that Mueller had a history of abusing children, but that they failed to remove him. Mueller had spent several months in 1984 at a treatment center, the Servants of the Paraclete Center in New Mexico, before being assigned to Vianney.

Another recently settled case that has made headlines involved Donald Straub of Crestwood, who was defrocked as a priest in 2005. The lawsuit focused on the molestation of a boy who was 13 at the time he was abused by Straub in 1973.

In the Straub case, St. Louis City Judge Donald L. McCullin found that church officials "may be found guilty of aiding and abetting" crimes.

"It is abundantly clear," McCullin stated, "that the law imposes on the Archdiocese the duty not to be an accessory to child sexual abuse."

McCullin continued that "despite the known risk posed by Straub and others, the Archdiocese never contacted law enforcement regarding any allegations of sexual assault by any of its employees."

McCullin's 16-page order in the case said Archdiocesan staff "knew Straub had a propensity to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior" with kids yet "disregarded the risk" which he posed.