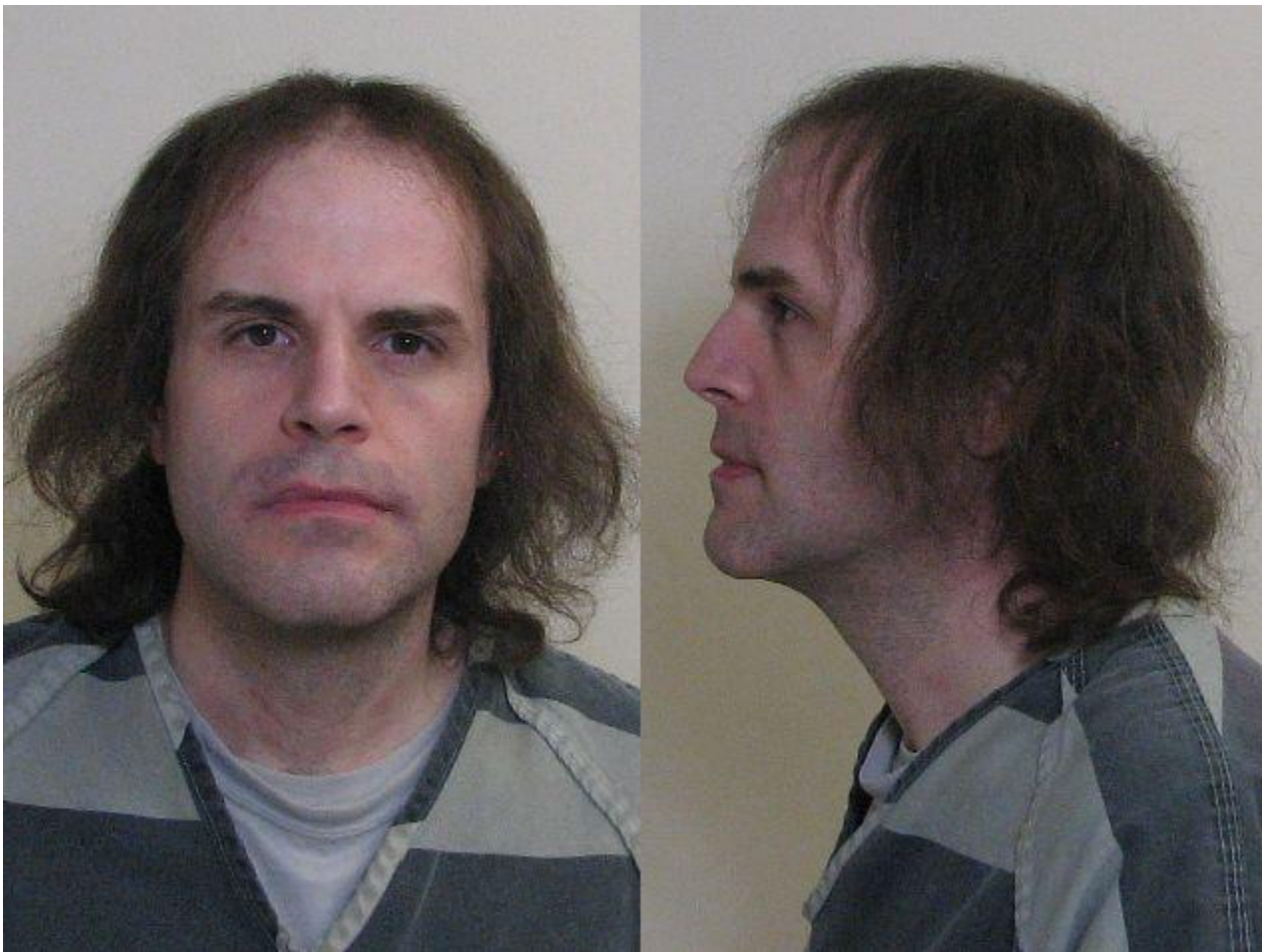


# Bethalto man sentenced to 35 years in prison for sexual abuse charges

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - **Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons** announced that a Bethalto man was sentenced to 35 years in prison today involving sexual abuse charges that occurred between 2011 to 2014.

**Jason E. Ehlers** (d.o.b. 12/1/77) was charged in April 2014 by State's Attorney Gibbons. On December 21, 2015, Ehlers pleaded guilty to one count Predatory Criminal

Sexual Assault of a Child (Class X Felony), one count of Criminal Sexual Assault (Class 1 Felony), three counts of Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse (Class 2 Felony), one count of Sexual Exploitation of a Child (Class 4 Felony), and two counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Child (Class A Misdemeanor). There were eight separate victims.

Ehlers was sentenced by Associate Judge Neil Schroeder to 20 years for one count of Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault of a Child and 15 years on one count of Criminal Sexual Assault. These sentences will be served consecutively, with the defendant required to serve at least 85 percent of the sentence. Ehlers was also sentenced to 7 years each on the three Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse charges, 3 years on the felony Sexual Exploitation of a Child charge and 364 days in jail on the two misdemeanor Sexual Exploitation charges. These will run concurrent to the sentences on the Class X and 1 felonies.

At the time of the charges, Ehlers was a teacher in the Triad School District and a former teacher in the Bethalto School District. Investigators with the Bethalto Police Department determined at that time that no current or former students of Ehlers were his victims. He subsequently resigned his position.

The investigation revealed that the abuse of the victims occurred at Ehlers' home, and that the victims in the cases knew the defendant prior to the abuse. Due to the age of the victims and the State's Attorney's desire to maintain their privacy, additional information regarding the victims will not be released. Prosecutors kept family members apprised throughout the case.

State's Attorney Gibbons offered praise to Assistant State's Attorneys Kathleen Nolan, head of the office's Children's Justice Division, and Ali Foley, whose collaboration with the Madison County Child Advocacy Center and the Bethalto Police Department secured the plea and conviction of Ehlers. "Our community is a safer place today because Jason Ehlers, a loathsome man who committed despicable acts, is going to prison for a lengthy time." Gibbons emphasized that this case is an excellent example of the coordinated effort that goes into ensuring there is justice for young victims. "This was an especially complicated case to prosecute, however, with the support of our partners in law enforcement and child advocacy, we were able to ensure that the defendant faced severe consequences for his crimes."

Several victims and parents read statements in court at today's sentencing hearing. "The heinous acts of this serial abuser have caused immeasurable suffering for the victims and their families," said State's Attorney Gibbons. "Our thoughts and prayers are with them every day as they try to heal." He added that he wants these cases to provide encouragement to anyone who has been sexually abused to come forward. "The

extraordinary bravery shown by these young victims should give hope to other victims of abuse that they, too, can find justice, and that their local police department, the Child Advocacy Center, and the Madison County State's Attorney's Office are there for them.”

Ehlers was remanded back to the custody of the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville where he will await transfer to an Illinois Department of Corrections facility.