

## Mother gets probation in child-abuse case

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A Culpeper woman who put two of her children in the trunk of her car as an apparent punishment was sentenced to probation yesterday in city court.

Tamatha M. Parker, 34, had previously pleaded guilty to two felony counts of child abuse. Her sentencing hearing was yesterday in Fredericksburg Circuit Court.

Parker told police that she put two of her young children into her trunk to punish them for their behavior inside the Wal-Mart in Fredericksburg's Central Park on June 25.

Parker was sentenced to two years in prison on each count of child abuse, but all the time was suspended on condition of her good behavior for 10 years.

Fredericksburg prosecutor Travis Bird said Parker will serve an undetermined period of probation, take a parenting class and undergo substance abuse treatment.

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The highly publicized incident took place in the parking lot outside the Wal-Mart. An off-duty police officer from New Hampshire was parked next to Parker's car when another woman asked him if he'd seen children being placed in the trunk.

The officer, Wayne Ingersoll, stopped Parker's car as she was pulling out of a parking space and asked if she had children in the trunk. Parker initially said no, but later untied the rope holding the trunk together and let the children out.

Parker told Ingersoll she was punishing the children for misbehaving in the store. She said she was moving the car to scare them, but wasn't going to leave the lot, according to the evidence.

She later told a city detective that the children had "acted like complete heathens."

Ingersoll turned the case over to Fredericksburg police, who filed charges against Parker. She was arrested and jailed a few days later, but released on bond.

Parker has two other children. All four children remained in her custody after the incident at Central Park, but it's unclear whether they all still do.

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