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Spotsylvania man convicted after being caught in child pornography sting

Keith Epps

Mar 2, 2023

A Spotsylvania County man who solicited sexual contact with who he thought was a 10-year-old girl was convicted of 36 felony offenses Wednesday.

Matthew Tobias Erickson, 42, was convicted by a Spotsylvania Circuit Court jury of 26 counts of solicitation of a minor and 10 counts of possessing child pornography. He was acquitted of multiple other charges.

The solicitation convictions each carry mandatory minimum sentences of at least five years in prison, meaning Erickson would receive at least 130 years when he is sentenced May 8.



Erickson

According to evidence presented by prosecutors Ryan Mehaffey and Jeremy Thiesen, a private group that goes online in search of predators had a profile picture of a 10-year-old girl. A woman from Indiana was online pretending to be the child.

Erickson reached out to the “girl” via Instagram during the latter part of 2021, telling her she was beautiful, and eventually had a number of explicit online conversations with the woman pretending to be a child. Among the messages he sent were videos of him performing a sex act on himself.

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At one point, the “child” wrote about coming to Virginia to visit her aunt. Erickson tried to arrange meeting the child in person when she came, Mehaffey said.

Members of the predator identification group eventually showed up at Erickson’s home with a camera and got him to confess to his activities. Police were called, and child pornography was recovered from Erickson’s phone.

Keith Epps: 540/374-5404

kepps@freelancestar.com

By Keith Epps

Covers crime for Fredericksburg region
