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OFFICE OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY ATTORNEY

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## Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE: June 13, 2022

### **Former Forest Lake middle school teacher found guilty of sexually assaulting students**

STILLWATER, MN --- A former Forest Lake middle school teacher has been found guilty on charges relating to the sexual assault of two juvenile students, a jury found Friday afternoon.

58-year-old James E. Carter was charged in 2020 with two counts of second degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of fourth degree criminal sexual conduct following an investigation conducted by the Washington County Sheriff's Office. According to the complaint, two juveniles told investigators their former middle school teacher had sexually assaulted them at his home on several occasions. Carter would reportedly employ current and former students to perform work at his home and provide gifts to them.

On Friday, a jury found Carter guilty of one count of second degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of fourth degree criminal sexual conduct after 4 ½ hours of deliberation. Carter was found not guilty on the remaining second degree count.

Washington County Assistant Attorneys Keshini Ratnayake and Kayla Wengronowitz commend the victims for reporting the abuse and their patience throughout the process.

"We are incredibly proud of these two individuals for having the courage to come forward. They did so to make sure that what happened to them would never happen to another student," said Ratnayake and Wengronowitz in a joint statement. "We are thankful to everyone involved in this case who patiently waited two years for a resolution of this matter, and we are grateful to our law enforcement partners who thoroughly investigated the allegations and thoroughly supported us throughout the trial process."

Carter is due back in court for sentencing at 10:30 a.m. on September 16th before Judge Richard Ilkka.

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