

## Convicted abusers get years

By KEITH EPPS | Posted: Friday, December 21, 2001 6:01 am

Harm to boy yields terms for ex-Marine, girlfriend

A judge yesterday gave the maximum sentence--five years in prison--to a man convicted of abusing his girlfriend's 21/2 year-old son.

Allen Brown, 25, a former Marine, was sentenced by Judge William H. Ledbetter Jr. in Spotsylvania Circuit Court.

Meanwhile, Ledbetter sentenced the child's mother, 21-year-old Shawna Ostberg, to a total of four years in prison for her role in the abuse.

Ostberg was convicted of two charges, felony child abuse and child neglect.

Anthony Voage, one of five small children living in the Brown/Ostberg household at the time, had two black eyes and a skull fracture when a social worker went to his Spotsylvania home March 22.

He also had a number of lacerations and bruises, along with dried blood in his hair.

Ostberg and Brown had a total of five children, all under the age of 5, living with them in Timber Ridge subdivision. The couple had moved here from North Carolina in September 2000.

Two of the children were Ostberg's and two were Brown's, while the youngest was their child in common. Ostberg has since had her second child with Brown.

Only Anthony appeared abused, witnesses at previous court hearings said.

Ostberg's sister, who once lived with the couple, said Anthony was often mistreated because he was having a hard time with potty training.

Another woman, Brandy Puckett, who lived nearby, said she called social services after seeing Anthony the morning of March 22. Puckett said she'd seen bruises on the child before.

Anthony was removed from the home that day. Nicole Reeves, a social worker, said that when she went back to the home on March 23, the other children made numerous unsolicited comments about what had been happening to Anthony.

Reeves said at an earlier hearing that the children told her that they hated Anthony and had "punched and scratched" him under the prodding of Ostberg and Brown.

They also said Anthony was made to sleep and eat in the bathroom and had his nails painted purple.

Reeves quoted Anthony as telling her, "Mommy hits me, Mommy bites me, Mommy hurts me." Police said Ostberg admitted biting Anthony as a form of discipline.

Ostberg and Brown yesterday were still denying knowing how Anthony got the black eyes or the skull fracture. Ledbetter said he didn't believe them.

Prosecutor Stuart Sullivan said Brown has a history of violence, with two assault convictions in New Hampshire and a child abuse charge in North Carolina before moving here.

He also received a 30-day jail sentence in August after being convicted of assault in Stafford County for an incident at a county motel.

"It's an absolute shame what happened to that child," Sullivan said. "Thank goodness he got out of there before something even worse happened."

Anthony is now in foster care, as are Ostberg's other children. Two of Brown's children are with their mother, authorities said.