

## **Former correctional officer gets 14 years in prison**

By KEITH EPPS | Posted: Tuesday, November 30, 2004 1:08 am

Spotsylvania man molested girls

A former correctional officer has been ordered to serve 14 years in prison for molesting two young girls between 1999 and 2002.

John M. Santiago, 52, of Spotsylvania County was sentenced to 35 years in prison with 21 years suspended last week in Spotsylvania Circuit Court.

He pleaded guilty in September to animate object sexual penetration and three counts of taking indecent liberties with a child.

In exchange for his guilty pleas, prosecutor Stuart Sullivan dropped 11 other charges.

Santiago worked as a correctional officer at the Prince William-Manassas regional jail prior to his arrest in March.

His victims, both acquaintances of Santiago's family, are now young teenagers. He had been close to the girls' families since before they were born.

One victim told authorities that she stayed at Santiago's home in June 2002 while her mother was out of town. She said he came into her room at night and improperly touched her.

The second victim said she was improperly touched by Santiago on several occasions in 1999 when she stayed at his home. She said she was scared by his behavior and pretended to be asleep.

The second victim didn't mention the attacks for years because of the relationship between her family and Santiago's family.

The abuse came to light in March when the girl told a teacher what Santiago had done years earlier. The other victim later came forward with her story and Santiago was arrested.

The sentence issued by Judge William H. Ledbetter Jr. was well above what was called for by the state sentencing guidelines. Sullivan said the girls were severely damaged by Santiago's actions and will need years of counseling.

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