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DON O'BRIEN

Staff Writer | dobrien@whig.com

Harsh sentence in abuse case sends message

The 15-year prison sentence a Quincy man received Wednesday morning in Adams County Circuit Court was significant for a number of reasons.

Chad Payne, 40, was convicted in September of domestic abuse against his girlfriend and her daughter. It took a jury only an hour to find that he was guilty of four felony charges, including Class X armed violence. Since he was convicted of a Class X charge, Payne had no chance at probation during Wednesday's hearing in front of Judge William Mays. Facing between 10 and 30 years in prison, Payne received 15, which is five years short of what Assistant State's Attorney Laura Keck requested.

Keck was not disappointed, though. The lengthy prison sentence is a rarity in domestic abuse cases like this.

Payne was arrested after a June 22 disturbance in an apartment in the 100 block of North Eighth. He was accused of choking his girlfriend and not allowing her or her teen daughter to leave the apartment after the altercation. The woman told police that Payne tried to choke her and wielded a steak knife at one point. Payne threatened to kill them and said he was going to kill himself, too, the woman said.

Police showed up just in time. They heard the woman's screams and found Payne with a knife when they arrived. One of the responding officers who asked that his name not be used said the scene was one of the scariest he had come across in his career.

Getting convictions in domestic abuse cases is rare. More often than not, the victim in the case will recant the story originally told to police. Without the victim's cooperation, it is difficult to prosecute. In more than three years of covering the area court scene, I've seen more than enough domestic abuse cases hit dead ends because the witnesses wouldn't cooperate with prosecutors.

That is part of the cycle of abuse. The abuser will tell the person they've harmed that they didn't mean to do it and ask for forgiveness, telling them they will change their habits. It's rare for the perpetrator to change the violent behavior, and the abuse usually continues.

The woman involved in this case told Mays in her victim impact statement that she wants to be with Payne once he is released from prison. She also knows that what happened to her wasn't right. The woman and her daughter testified at Payne's trial. Their testimony was vital in Payne's conviction.

Unfortunately, domestic violence is a big problem. FBI statistics show that, on average, a woman is beaten by her husband or partner every 15 seconds. In the U.S., domestic violence results in more injuries to women than rape, accidents and muggings combined.

How does the violence stop? Victim cooperation like in this case would go a long way. Some might also argue that penalties for people who get convicted are harsh enough. Simple domestic battery is just a Class A misdemeanor in Illinois, a crime punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine. Aggravated domestic battery is a Class 2 felony that has a maximum seven-year prison sentence.

Payne's past criminal history — he has seven previous felony convictions — meant he was eligible for an extended prison stay. Hopefully his case and sentence will show those who abuse that there are severe consequences for it. And maybe the strength showed by the victim in this case will spur others to stand up to the abusers.

Special Olympians hit the hardwood

BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT: Quincy Exchange Club to host competition Sunday at QU

By DON O'BRIEN
Staff Writer | 217-221-3370
dobrien@whig.com | @DOBrienWHIG

QUINCY — When it comes to sports, basketball is king in Quincy.

In addition to all the highly successful high school and college programs in town, the city plays host to one of the biggest Gus Macker 3-on-3 basketball tournaments every Memorial Day weekend.

The Quincy Exchange Club heads up the Macker, and the club has found a way to add some indoor hoops to its basketball sponsorship.

On Sunday, the Exchange Club will run a Special Olympics basketball tournament at Quincy University. Courts at the school's fitness center and the Pepsi Arena court, which is home to the school's teams, will be bustling with more than 130 Special Olympians representing Quincy, Rushville, Beardstown and Jacksonville.

"It's a win-win situation for us," said tournament organizer Perry Terwelp, a Quincy Exchange Club member. "It's giving back to the community. Once you see these athletes competing, you get hooked."

The Exchange Club has hosted events for Special Olympians in

the past. The last event two years ago had to be canceled because of a snowstorm. The weather is not expected to pose any problems this year.

Heather Davis, area director for the Special Olympics, is thankful for the tournament.

"All of our athletes have to practice for eight weeks before they can compete," Davis said. "This is a way for them to come to one setting and get a minimum of two games to prepare them for district and state tournament competition."

There are 12 teams scheduled to compete Sunday, with players from the age of 10 on up. Davis said teams are divided according to their ability level.

Basketball is just one of many sports that Special Olympics offers as part of a year-around program for its participants. Davis said a recent bowling tournament held at Tangerine Bowl in Quincy drew more than 130 participants.

The Exchange Club is one of several Quincy groups helping the athletes. Hy-Vee is providing breakfast and lunch for the players, Sterling Awards has donated awards, and Refreshment Services Pepsi has donated free T-shirts for each player.

Students from Quincy University also will be involved in Sun-



With his mom, Cyndi Thornton, rooting for him at his side, Joshua Thornton of Jacksonville, makes his way through a basketball dribbling course during a basketball skills competition for Special Olympians in February 2015 at Quincy University. | H-W File Photo/Steve Bohnstedt

day's event. The school has established a group called QU Hawks for Special Olympics for students to help out at Special Olympics events.

Davis said members of the school's men's basketball team are going to serve as honorary

coaches for the teams Sunday.

Admission to the event is free. The day will start with an opening ceremony at 9 a.m., with games scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. The tournament championship game is set for 1:30 p.m. at Pepsi Arena.



Connie Fifer, administrative assistant for residential services at Chaddock, stacks gifts from Santa Express on Friday in Byrnes Hall at the school. Santa Express is an annual event where more than 35 churches across Central Illinois donate Christmas presents for the kids at Chaddock. | H-W Photo/Michael Kipley

Christmas trust

SANTA EXPRESS: Community, churches support Chaddock students with gifts during the holidays

By DOUG WILSON
Senior Writer | 217-221-3372
dwilson@whig.com | @DougWilsonWHIG

QUINCY — Gifts for children came rolling in Thursday at Chaddock as part of the annual Santa Express campaign.

Jeff Rasche, associate director of stewardship at the school, said about 190 children will have a better Christmas thanks to the outpouring support from churches, youth groups and individuals.

Chaddock was founded as a ministry of the United Methodist Church in 1853. It still gets help from United Methodists across a wide region.

In recent years, Chaddock has become a nationally known treatment center for children with developmental trauma and attachment issues.

"Most of these kids have had really terrible experiences with adults early in their life, and it's led to a basic mistrust of all adults," Rasche said. "So when there are people who they don't even know who give them gifts, it is

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Jeff Rasche, associate director of stewardship at Chaddock

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The Santa Express tradition began more than 25 years ago. Many churches, some as much as 200 miles from Quincy, buy gifts

for children or items to help Chaddock with its ministry. Drivers travel to 20 collection-point churches where gifts are dropped off and bring the items back to Quincy.

Tilma Togarepi, admissions coordinator at Chaddock, helped unload some of the gifts Thursday. The last item to come out of a van was a child's bike with bright purple paint.

The school has 50 kids living in residential halls on campus. About 140 other students are in local foster care and take classes at Chaddock.

Rasche said the Santa Express tradition "sends a powerful message" to students who otherwise would not have gifts coming. The gift program also is meaningful to donors.

"One lady who is not able to have children buys gifts and knows that on Christmas morning the gifts will bring joy to a child," Rasche said.

Earlier this week a man on Social Security stopped at Chaddock to see what kind of present he could buy a child.

"It's great. We get to see people at their very best," Rasche said.