

80-Year Old Charged With Luring Girl To Car

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News

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CLAYTON, Mo. (AP) - An 80-year-old man faces a harassment charge in St. Louis County after police say he tried to lure a young girl and her mother into his car.



He has a history of this behavior, police say, and once admitted doing it as far back as the 1990s. He was given probation the last time.

Laurence A. Rhodes, of the 10600 block of Landseer Drive, was charged May 19 with one misdemeanor harassment and one felony harassment charge. Bail was set at \$50,000.

St. Louis County Police Officer Brian Schellman said Rhodes approached the girl and mother on separate occasions in the 10000 block of Earl Drive.

According to court papers, Rhodes approached a 12-year-old girl in February. He asked the girl to get into his car and offered her candy. She became frightened, yelled and took off running.

The girl's mother spotted her running and took note of the vehicle, but she didn't call police.

Police say that Rhodes returned on March 13 and offered the mother a ride. She refused. According to police, Rhodes then leaned over toward the glove box and, in a stern voice, told her to get into the car.

Rhodes was back five days later, police say. He approached the mother in his car and said, "You gonna take this ride." She became frightened by the man's behavior and ran off, police say. She gave police a description of the stranger that led to his arrest.

Rhodes' first name is also spelled Lawrence in some court documents, but Schellman said his first name is spelled Laurence in the most recent arrest. Rhodes turned 80 this month.

Rhodes has been accused of this before. In 2007, Rhodes was charged with misdemeanor peace disturbance for allegedly trying to get a 19-year-old woman into his car near the corner of Duke and Empress drives in North County. The young woman resisted but got a license plate number, police say. During conversations with detectives after his 2007 arrest, Rhodes admitted similar activities going back at least 10 years, police said.

In 2008, Rhodes pleaded guilty of peace disturbance. He was put on probation for six months. Court records indicated it was his first offense. But police at the time said he was suspected in dozens of similar incidents over the previous decade.

In most cases, he tried to get teens into his car by offering a ride, police said. Several who accepted rides found themselves in conversations that revolved around sex, police said.

Schellman said police are unsure if there are any other victims at this time. If anyone has information about Rhodes, please call St. Louis County police at 314-889-2341.