

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



SHANNON WALLACE  
District Attorney

Cherokee County Justice Center  
90 North Street, Suite 390  
Canton, GA 30114

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: Cyndi Crossland  
Public Information Officer  
cbcrossland@cherokeega.com  
770-479-1488

**Canton resident admits to aggravated child molestation**  
**State vs. Mark Richard Lukehart**

**May 5, 2021** – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Canton resident Mark Richard Lukehart, 62, entered a guilty plea last month to aggravated child molestation and other related sexual charges.

These charges stem from incidents involving a child who was under the age of 16 and a relative of the defendant. Lukehart molested the child on multiple occasions over the course of a year. The child eventually disclosed the abuse to a suicide hotline, prompting Canton Police to conduct an investigation.

“Basic human decency dictates that you do not have sex with a child,” said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. “This defendant, who was once a schoolteacher in another county, took advantage of an innocent child and sexually assaulted her on multiple occasions, pushing her to a point where she contemplated taking her own life.”

During the plea hearing on March 22, the child victim provided an impact statement describing how the defendant’s actions led her to attempt suicide and self-harm. She shared that she suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, frequently has flashbacks, and continues to have issues with trust. She asked the defendant, “Why did you rape me? Do you hate me?”

After accepting Lukehart’s negotiated guilty plea, Cherokee County Superior Court Judge Tony Baker sentenced him to 22 years to serve in confinement with no possibility for parole, followed by life on probation. Upon his release from prison, Lukehart is prohibited from contacting the victim or the victim’s family and must adhere to sex offender special conditions.

“Our hearts go out to the young victim who has a long road ahead to recover from these crimes,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “While no outcome can restore this child’s innocence, this sentence will prevent Mark Lukehart from hurting any more children in the future.”

*The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.*

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