



Cobb mom gets jail time in teen alcohol case

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After **Kecia Evangela Whitfield was sentenced to a year and half in jail and 30 months probation** for providing alcohol to minors, Sarah Reed hugged Cobb County Solicitor General Barry Morgan and thanked his team of prosecutors.

"I want her to think twice," Reed said. "I want the community to think twice."

Reed's 16-year-old son Garrett died after police say he obtained alcohol from Whitfield's step-son, Lyndon Winfree, on Jan. 23. In court Wednesday, Whitfield, 44, testified she purchased the alcohol that night, but didn't know her step-son planned to give it to friends.

Garrett Reed, a Harrison High School student, was the driver in the fatal wreck. His blood alcohol level was .13 at the time of his death. A level of .08 is considered legally drunk in Georgia.

Whitfield, formerly of Powder Springs, was found guilty on five counts of furnishing alcohol to minors, but acquitted of reckless conduct. The six jurors spent roughly four and a half hours in deliberation.

Cobb State Court Judge Russell Carlisle, who characterized Whitfield's testimony as "callous indifference," did not sentence her the maximum 12 months of jail per each misdemeanor count, but acknowledged her sentence should be a warning to others.

"[This] may show you there is another way out there and it will send a message out to the community that we cannot tolerate this," he said.

Whitfield was also fined \$1,300 and must perform 100 hours of community service.

Much of the trial centered around whether Whitfield knew the alcohol she purchased was intended for the other teens. She testified Wednesday in Cobb State Court that her step-son, Lyndon Winfree, took the alcohol without her knowledge.

Lyndon, who was granted immunity in the case, testified that his step-mother knew the alcohol was for the teenagers.

Whitfield said she and her ex-husband, with whom she shares a house, have allowed Lyndon, 17, to drink at home under supervision.

“We do because we’d rather him drink at home, because they’re all drinking,” she said, later adding: “They don’t get drunk, but I’d rather them be at home, safe, than out in the street.”

However, she said she has never provided alcohol to other teens and did not know Lyndon intended to provide the alcohol to others.

Whitfield testified that Lyndon asked her to purchase a “big bottle” of rum on Jan. 23, alcohol that Whitfield said she planned to drink at home with family and friends. She asked her step-son’s friend, Brandon Jordan, to drive her to the store where she said she purchased Captain Morgan rum, Jack Daniel’s Whiskey and cigarettes.

Upon her return, she left the bag of alcohol on the couch and went upstairs for 20-30 minutes to tend to her 11-month-old baby, she said. When she returned, Lyndon and the bag of alcohol were gone.

“I came down to make myself a drink and the whole bag was gone. Everything,” she said. “I called [Lyndon] because he took all my liquor. I called him and he didn’t answer my cell.”

In closing arguments, Prosecutor Jason Fincher said Whitfield acted recklessly in leaving the alcohol unsupervised.

“It is reckless to hand a bottle of liquor to a teenager and expect that the teenager will do the right thing,” he said.

Defense attorney John Greco said his client had never met the five teens who police say ultimately drank the rum, nor did she knowingly buy the alcohol for them.

“Was it a reasonable, foreseeable consequence that Lyndon would steal the alcohol, take it out of the house and give any of it to friends?” Greco said in his closing statement. “I doubt it. There’s no evidence [of that] in this case.”

Whitfield still faces drug charges in a May arrest at her home, where police found more than 4 grams of marijuana.

Also arrested in that case were John Charles Whitfield, 45, and 25-year-old Charles Anthony Whitfield.

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