

U.S. Dept. of Justice: Rock county man convicted of sex trafficking adult and minor victims

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MADISON, WIS. – Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke and U.S. Attorney Timothy M. O’Shea today announced the conviction of Cory Hereford, age 50, of Beloit, Wisconsin, in the Western District of Wisconsin, on charges of sex trafficking, conspiracy to commit sex trafficking, maintaining a property for the purposes of distributing and using controlled substances, and of having committed sex trafficking of a minor while being a person previously convicted of a crime that required registering as a sex offender. The jury reached a verdict yesterday evening after five hours of deliberation following a four-day trial in federal court in Madison, Wisconsin.

The government presented evidence at trial that Hereford targeted vulnerable young women struggling with drug addiction, one of whom was a minor – 16 years old at the time – to engage in commercial sex. He enticed the victims with access to heroin, and in some instances threatened to withhold the heroin to induce withdrawal sickness as a means of compelling the victims to engage in prostitution for his profit. In other instances, Hereford threatened physical violence to achieve his criminal ends.

The evidence demonstrated that Hereford conspired with his co-defendant, Tonyiel Partee, 30, of Janesville, Wisconsin, to recruit victims and compel their commercial sex work. Partee pled guilty to conspiracy to commit sex trafficking in July 2021.

Other evidence at trial showed that Hereford maintained a home on South Franklin Street in Janesville, for the purposes of distributing and using controlled substances, specifically heroin and cocaine. Cory Hereford was previously convicted of second-degree sexual assault of a child in the State of Wisconsin, which required him to register as a sex offender.

“This defendant preyed on vulnerable members of our society – young women and girls addicted to drugs,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “Using their addictions to lure them deeper into the world of drugs and prostitution, he trafficked these victims for his own greed, without regard to their age, their pain, or their safety. We will continue to enforce our human trafficking laws to restore freedom and dignity to victims of this crime.”

“Mr. Hereford targeted and exploited young and vulnerable women, forcing them into commercial sex to generate income for him. I commend the trial team, investigators, and victim advocates for their commitment and diligence,” said U.S. Attorney Timothy O’Shea of the Western District of Wisconsin. “These guilty verdicts show that my office and Wisconsin law enforcement are united against sex trafficking.”

“The Janesville Police Department appreciates the assistance of our federal partners on this important and complex case,” said Chief David J. Moore of the Janesville Police Department. “This investigation illustrates the methods that human traffickers use by exploiting our most vulnerable children. Contrary to the beliefs of many, these criminals do not abduct these victims on a street corner but cultivate the victims over a lengthy period of time. As a community, we need to understand these appalling methods and look out for those in our community that may fall prey to these criminals. We need to learn that when we see suspicious activity, report it to a responsible authority.”

The court will sentence Hereford on May 12, 2022. The sex trafficking charge involving a minor carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years and a

maximum of life in federal prison. The charge of committing a crime involving a minor while a committed felon required to register as a sex offender has a mandatory 10-year penalty that federal law requires be served consecutive to any sentence imposed on the sex trafficking of a minor. The charge of maintaining a drug house has a maximum penalty of 20 years.

The case was investigated by Janesville Police Department, with the assistance of Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation, and the Rock County Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Julie Pfluger of the Western District of Wisconsin, and Slava Kuperstein of the Civil Rights Division's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit.

To report suspected human trafficking or to obtain resources for victims, call 888-373-7888; text "BeFree" (233733), or live chat at www.HumanTraffickingHotline.org . The toll-free phone, SMS text lines, and online chat function are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Help is available in English, Spanish, Creole, or in more than 200 additional languages. The National Hotline is not managed by law enforcement, immigration or an investigative agency. Correspondence with the National Hotline is confidential and you may request assistance or report a tip anonymously.