

'I want people to talk about it': Sex abuse allegations surface against former Glencoe teacher

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More than four decades have passed since Dave Stroud was a young boy growing up in Glencoe in the early 1970s, when he said his parents entrusted him and his two brothers to the care of a respected male teacher from their neighborhood school.

But Stroud, 55, who now lives in Colorado, still recalls the fear he felt when the teacher walked into his bedroom late one night and allegedly molested him as he feigned sleep. Stroud says it was the desire to gain some measure of justice that compelled him to come forward against the teacher, prompting Glencoe School District 35 officials to release a statement about the accusations levied by Stroud — and a recently uncovered second accuser.

“I want people to talk about it, and that’s already starting to happen,” Stroud said. “I also want people who might have been struggling and found it hard to say anything, to now be able to stand up to him. I’d also like to see him admit he did it and apologize.”

The Tribune is not identifying the teacher, who has not been charged with a crime. But the former teacher, reached at his home in another state on Friday, denied ever abusing any children.

“They are not true, and he’s the only person who has ever accused me,” said the retired teacher, adding that outside of his teaching career, he for years led youth excursions across the U.S. and beyond. “I don’t know why this is going on. This person for some reason is trying to ruin my life, but I don’t have a single memory of him.”

Stroud says that he made the decision about five years ago to talk to police about his experiences and recently undertook a campaign on Facebook to bring attention to the matter.

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“It was the Jerry Sandusky case that heightened my need to talk about what happened to me,” said Stroud, who said he flew out from Colorado in 2012 to file a police report in Glencoe against the teacher, who had since retired.

The school board announced at its Thursday meeting officials had been made aware of allegations from a student resurfaced from a 2012 report. District 35’s attorney said the district heard from the same former student in 2014, and again recently. Stroud says he is that student. District officials also learned on Friday of a second former student levying similar charges, the attorney said.

“The dilemmas we are running into include anonymity, statute of limitations and, so far, we do not have a single allegation of an incident on District 35 property or within the scope of (the teacher’s) employment,” said Michael Loizzi, District 35’s longtime attorney.

In a statement also posted on the District 35 website, the school board administration and staff said officials were contacted by a former student on July 17 about abuse that reportedly took place in a “private residence” in the early 1970s.

“We are aware that this information is circulating through the community and we wanted to be sure you learned of this matter directly from the Glencoe schools,” the statement reads.

The letter does not name the teacher, but includes the year the teacher retired and says the person no longer lives in Illinois. Loizzi said the school district learned on Friday morning that there was a second accuser.

The statement says the allegations against the teacher are “of a sexual nature” and that the school board reached out to Glencoe police after being informed of the accusations.

“We have been reviewing district records for evidence in support of these allegations,” the letter reads. “As of this date of this statement, the district has not been able to verify the allegations.”

Loizzi said he had conversations with previous District 35 Superintendent Cathy Crawford about the matter in 2012, when the allegations first surfaced. Loizzi said that at the time, the information was passed on to Glencoe police, who he said investigated the case but opted not to recommend charges be filed.

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Loizzi said the matter was referred once more to Glencoe police in 2014, when the former student again reached out. Loizzi said the school district referred the matter to police, but, again, no charges were filed.

On July 20, Glencoe Public Safety Director Cary Lewandowski said that the accusations had been reviewed by the police department in 2012 and no charges were filed against the teacher.

But on Friday, Lewandowski said he could not comment further on the case in any way. He did not return phone calls later Friday seeking to confirm whether a second police report had been filed accusing the teacher of abuse.

Loizzi said the statute of limitations in Illinois for sexual abuse of a minor is 20 years from the time the person turns 18 or when the victim realizes he or she was abused.

Loizzi has had experience in a similar case through his representation of Winnetka School District 36, where former teacher Bill Bricker faced charges of child molestation some 45 years after the accusations first surfaced. Bricker died in 2015, at the age of 94, before ever facing trial.

“It starts with one victim, in many cases,” Loizzi said. “It either dies or gains momentum, and I don’t where this is going yet except we are pursuing it.”

At the July 27 school board meeting, District 35 President Gary Ruben said the district is still looking into the matter.

“We are trying to determine what the facts are in an open and honest and sincere way,” Ruben said. “We are not pretending it didn’t happen if it happened. But on the other hand, we don’t know what happened so all we can do is look at our files and records and we are in the process of doing that.”

The District 35 statement encourages anyone with more information to contact District 35 or the Glencoe Public Safety Department.

Stroud expressed relief on Friday that District 35 officials made the public announcement and have been reviewing district records of the teacher.

“A big reason why I stepped forward is there is a child molester out there enjoying hero status,” Stroud said. “He knew he had done it all along the way, and he’s possibly doing it still.”

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