



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Manly, Stewart & Finaldi Starts Trial Today in Alleged Sexual Assault Case Against Yucaipa Calimesa Unified School District and Forer Yucaipa High School Teacher Sheila Heacock**

**Irvine, California** – Victim’s attorneys Manly, Stewart & Finaldi will begin a jury trial in a case that alleges former Yucaipa High School teacher, Sheila Heacock, sexually assaulted a 16-year old student.

Sheila Heacock, 44, pleaded guilty in 2015 to a single charge of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor more than three years younger in a plea agreement with prosecutors, according to court records. She was sentenced to 270 days in county jail and 5 years of probation.

According to the complaint, the victim began dating Heacock’s daughter who was also a student at Yucaipa High School. During this time Heacock told the victim that her daughter was too young to have sex with him and began grooming him to have sex with her for more than a year before school officials reported it to police.

The lawsuit alleges that Heacock frequently drove the victim alone in her personal vehicle to and from campus and from her home to his. She would often bring him home after the curfew imposed by his parents.

According to a sworn declaration by victim’s attorney, Vince Finaldi, as a result of Heacock consistently bringing the victim home past curfew, the victim’s mother called Yucaipa High School Assistant Principal, Cathy Pearson, to complain. Pearson did nothing for more than a year. Three months after Heacock began sexually abusing the victim his mother called Assistant Principal Pearson again to complain about Heacock. At that time Ms. Pearson promised to investigate Heacock’s interactions with the victim. Despite this promise, Pearson never reported Heacock to law enforcement, nor did she ever file a formal written report of suspected child abuse as required by law. Instead, Ms. Pearson informed the Principal who in turn notified the District administration. The District told Ms. Pearson not to make a mandated report to child protective services as

this could result in negative press coverage for the district. Instead the District claims to have secretly reported Heacock to the Yucaipa Chief of Police on Friday, April 11.

Under California law if Ms. Pearson had reported to Law Enforcement or Child Protective Services directly, an investigation would have commenced within 24 hours of the report, instead the district chose to secretly report Heacock to the Chief of Police and the investigation was not initiated for five days. In the meantime, Heacock continued to sexually molest the victim, according to the declaration.

In addition to molesting the victim repeatedly for more than three months Heacock sent approximately 10-15 nude photos of herself to the victim and accepted approximately five nude or partially nude photos from the victim, according to the declaration.

“Yucaipa Unified School District and Yucaipa High School administrators ignored complaints by our client’s family and repeatedly failed to report suspected child abuse to the proper authorities as required by law. Now the district has taken the morally depraved position that our client is at fault for his own molestation because he did not act as a reasonable 16-year old boy should have acted. This vile position taken by a public school district ignores the law which clearly states that minors cannot consent and are not at fault for their sexual molestation by a serial predator,” said victim’s attorney and victim’s advocate Vince Finaldi, a partner at the law firm of Manly, Stewart & Finaldi.

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[Manly, Stewart & Finaldi](#) is California’s leading law firm representing child victims of sexual abuse. The firm has represented more than 150 victims of clergy sexual abuse in California and hundreds of others throughout the United States. The firm also represented plaintiffs in the \$140,000,000 settlement against LAUSD in the Miramonte case, the largest sex abuse settlement against a School District in the US.