

Girl says McPhie touched her sexually

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A teenage girl told jurors Tuesday that Adam McPhie touched her sexually numerous times over roughly a three-year period, perhaps starting when she was in fourth grade.

“I looked up to him,” she said. “For a while I thought it was normal.”

The girl, now in her early teens, said she “didn’t feel right” about the episodes and felt worse later on when McPhie sometimes gave her money after the assaults.

“How did you feel when he gave you money?” prosecutor Angie Rolando asked.

“Gross,” the girl said. “Afterward I felt

like a prostitute.”

McPhie took the stand in his own defense later Tuesday and said he had never touched the girl inappropriately.

He said he was protective of the girl and her siblings, cared about them “more than I care about myself” and had never harmed any of them or made them feel uncomfortable.

McPhie, 44, is accused of sexually assaulting the girl in a Butte house at various times between January 2020 and August 2023, when she was between 9 and 12 years old. He has pleaded not guilty.

His trial started Monday and the girl took the stand late Tuesday morning, after a

licensed professional counselor talked in general terms about child sex abuse and how children respond and talk about it.

Police arrested McPhie in early October last year and he was charged then with nine counts of sexual abuse of children for allegedly having pornographic videos of children in 2023.

Prosecutors then filed three counts of incest against McPhie in December and he’s on trial for those. It is a distinct crime in Montana punishable by 100 years in prison with no chance of parole for the first 25 years.



JOSEPH SCHELLER, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Adam Lee McPhie, left, looks over toward county prosecutors during his trial on Tuesday in the Butte-Silver Bow Courthouse.

Please see MCPHIE, Page A2

FACE TO FACE WITH A FUGITIVE



DUNCAN ADAMS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Authorities said they captured an armed Michael Paul Brown on Friday around 2 p.m. at this trailer. It is sited alongside Warm Springs Creek and would be easily reached from Stumptown Road by a brief wade across the creek. The owner of the trailer and property, who requested anonymity, said Brown might have used the trailer for one hour or several hours.

Anaconda area man recounts finding suspected killer holed up in his trailer

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The property owner encountered accused killer Michael Paul Brown just before dark.

“I was just headed back to my (home) trailer and my dogs started barking,” the owner said. “And then I was face-to-face with him.”

The man who owns the property where Brown was captured Aug. 8 agreed to an interview Monday with The Montana Standard on the condition he not be named in the story.

Brown had been a fugitive since he allegedly shot and killed four people at the Owl Bar in Anaconda on Aug. 1.

“I was scared as sh--,” the owner said

about suddenly meeting Brown.

For several days, with Brown reportedly hiding in the vicinity of nearby Garrity Mountain, the owner had been consistently armed with a 9 mm handgun for protection. But he’d been up and down a ladder that day on his property west of Anaconda, he said, and did not have it with him. That’s something he now considers fortunate because there could have been a fraught outcome, he said. He noticed the fugitive had stolen a couple of jackets, but not from the owner’s home trailer, which he doesn’t believe Brown entered.

Please see BROWN, Page A2

Study probes non-workers’ barriers to job

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A lack of access to affordable child-care, chronic illness or disability and criminal justice history are some of the barriers that are keeping an estimated 100,000 Montanans aged 16 to 54 out of work.

That’s according to a recent study published by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, which showed that there is a severe labor shortage for open jobs in the state as tens of thousands of people are not working.

The department’s commissioner, Sarah Swanson, said the goal of the study was to try to highlight ways to reconnect those people with meaningful work.

“Montana’s economy continues to be strong, with June marking the ninth straight month of unemployment rates under 3%,” she said. “With nearly two jobs available for every one worker, Montana has an opportunity to increase participation in the labor force by connecting more than 100,000 Montanans to a meaningful and good-paying job in a high-demand sector. Today’s report is the first step in helping people who are able to work find their way back to employment.”

Technically, there are 1.6 job openings in the state for every one unemployed person. According to the state, the tight labor market has increased competition for workers and driven up wages.

There are over 560,000 working Montanans, but there are also 350,000 Montanans who are not working. Of those, 184,000 are over retirement age.

The study specifically focused on the 100,000 unemployed Montanans who are between the ages of 16 and 54. Many of those people, 84%, are either in school, caring for family or have an illness or disability.

But there are still 10,400 people who are not seeking employment for other, unspecified reasons.

“Further research aims to better understand this population, identifying ways the Montana Department of Labor and Industry can partner with these individuals to increase engagement in the labor force,” the report said.

Please see BARRIERS, Page A3

Department of Corrections workers move into new digs

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Two Montana State Prison employees have settled into their new townhome in Deer Lodge, a sharp upgrade for a couple of correctional officers who had been living in a camper for the last seven months.

The Pintler Meadows project is a new state-funded workforce housing unit that officials hope can mend a longtime recruitment issue that’s long plagued the facility anchored in rural western Montana.

Kenneth and Stephanie Erb officially got the keys to their townhome on Aug. 1, elevating from an “unhoused” situation to stable shelter. Montana Department

of Corrections Director Brian Gootkin said in a press release earlier this month the funding for the state housing was a crucial investment.

“The looks on these people’s faces when they received their keys was priceless,” he said.

The Erbs were drawn by a lottery system among state prison employees who applied to land the house. And their homeless status prior to Aug. 1 is not theirs alone; enough MSP employees are without a home that “currently unhoused” is among the criteria for applicants for the Pintler Meadows project.

A Department of Corrections spokesperson said Monday there is no current estimate of how

many state prison employees are currently homeless, and clarified that an applicant does not have to be unhoused in order to be drawn for a unit at Pintler Meadows.

However, since August 2023, the corrections department has housed 131 staff members through other short-term housing options. The local hotel spares eight rooms for prison employees; the campground can set aside 11 sites as well. Staff housing made available by the department two years ago provided another six rooms.

Housing has repeatedly been documented as one of Montana’s most pressing issues. Urban areas haven’t kept pace with the inflow



ANTONIO IBARRA OLIVARES, MISSOULIAN

A guard watch tower and the tall barbed wire perimeter fencing surrounding the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge are seen on Aug. 4.

Please see PRISON, Page A3