



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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Approved: SW
Date: July 25, 2023
Release No.: 23-094

Former Westlake High School Theater Employee Sentenced

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Thomas Charles Ballas (DOB 07/11/89), of Westlake Village, was sentenced on July 21, 2023, to one year Ventura County Jail and is required to register as a sex offender. Ballas, previously pled guilty to two felony counts of sending harmful matter to a minor. He also admitted to special allegations of taking advantage of a position of trust and of the victim being particularly vulnerable.

Ballas, a former theater technical specialist at Westlake High School, worked closely with the choir program. In December 2022, a student came forward to report that Ballas was sending her explicit photos of himself through the social media app Snapchat. In screenshots of the conversation, Ballas and the victim discuss the fact that the victim is underage.

Further investigation by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office revealed a possible second victim. Upon discovery of this information, detectives contacted the second victim, who then confirmed that she too had received explicit photos of Ballas when she was in high school.

Deputy District Attorney Michael Kern, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Unit, prosecuted the case.

"The defendant used his position of trust and authority to take advantage of young female students," Kern said. "By ingratiating himself to them, he created a scenario in which he could engage in inappropriate sexual conversations and behaviors. The conduct of this former school employee should serve as a sobering reminder to parents about their children's internet safety. I hope that this case will create opportunities for parents to speak openly to their children about the perils and pitfalls of social media."

Ballas was ordered to report to Ventura County Jail on August 7, 2023.

Case: 2022031335

Defendant Information:

Thomas Charles Ballas (DOB 07/11/89)

Westlake Village

Charges:

- (2 counts) PC 288.2 – Sending harmful matter to a minor

Special Allegations

- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable
- CRC 4.421(a)(11) – Defendant took advantage of a position of trust

