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Madison County, Illinois
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Haine announces verdict finding man to be Sexually Dangerous
Person; jury deliberates less than 15 minutes**

Edwardsville, IL — Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine announced today that a jury has issued a verdict finding a man to still be a Sexually Dangerous Person due to propensities to commit sex crimes.

The jury's finding means James M. Lopes, 49, formerly of Idaho, will remain in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Lopes came to the attention of local authorities in 2016 after he had interactions with children and parents at public places in Collinsville, Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, and Livingston. In one incident, he claimed to be on a "mini-date" with a young girl. In others, he referred to young girls as "princess."

Lopes claimed to be a founder of "Rise Star Church," which on various media channels promoted sex and marriage between adults and children. He distributed business cards, which included a web address for "Rise Star Church," to children and their parents. His various interactions with children then resulted in an investigation.

In an interview with a Madison County Sheriff's Office detective in 2016, Lopes admitted wanting to sexualize children in his church, particularly children wearing green, and stated: "We try to get them when they're 12 and under." Psychologists who interviewed him then diagnosed Lopes as having a pedophilic disorder, and that there was a substantial likelihood that Lopes would commit a sexual offense if released.

In 2017, a Madison County jury found Lopes to be a Sexually Dangerous Person, and he was placed in the custody of the Department of Corrections. However, under Illinois' Sexually Dangerous Persons Act, such a respondent is periodically entitled to another trial to determine whether the respondent remains sexually dangerous.

In the new trial, the jury returned its verdict Wednesday after deliberating less than 15 minutes.

Assistant State's Attorney Ali Foley and Assistant State's Attorney Rebecca Buettner prosecuted the case. Foley, who is chief of the Children's Justice Division at the State's Attorney's Office, noted in her closing argument that Lopes has refused to participate in sex-offender treatment programs offered through the Department of Corrections. Foley argued that Lopes "has done absolutely nothing to rehabilitate himself."

A psychologist again testified that he has diagnosed Lopes as having a pedophilic disorder, and that there's a substantial likelihood that Lopes would commit a sexual offense if released.

Haine commended the prosecution team and the law enforcement agencies that conducted the investigation.

"This individual's behavior put our community on edge, and I'm glad that with this victory he will remain in custody," Haine said. "This type of individual, who apparently believes that his twisted propensities are acceptable in our society and even founded a church to promote them, is particularly dangerous. I'm grateful for the dedication of our local police and the prosecutors in our Children's Justice Division, whose work ensures the continued safety of the children in our community. I thank the jurors for giving their attention to this serious matter."

Associate Judge Neil Schroeder presided at the trial.