



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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**Ventura Man Convicted in Violent Crime Spree
Including Attempted Murder of Child and Lewd Act on Dependent Adult**

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Joel James Gonzales (DOB 02/11/96), of Ventura, pled guilty to one count of felony lewd acts on a dependent adult. Today's plea follows a mistrial on that count during his recent trial. On July 22, 2024, the jury convicted Gonzales of the attempted murder of a six-year-old girl, felony assault with intent to commit rape during a burglary, and misdemeanor aggravated trespassing. Several special allegations and aggravating factors were also found true, including Gonzales causing great bodily injury in commission of a felony, the crime involving great violence, the victim being vulnerable, and the defendant taking advantage of a position of trust. A mistrial was declared because the jury deadlocked on whether the attempted murder was premeditated and deliberate. As part of today's disposition, Gonzales withdrew his plea of not guilty by reason of insanity.

"The defendant's plea and convictions today enable each of the victims to receive the justice and closure they deserve," said Senior Deputy District Attorney Tom Steele, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Unit.

On October 15, 2020, Gonzales was employed as a caretaker at the Royal Gardens elder care facility in Camarillo. The facility was separated into two areas: assisted living and memory care. Gonzales worked almost exclusively with patients suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. During his evening shift, Gonzales assaulted two victims at the facility. He cornered his first victim inside of her room on the assisted living side of the complex. Gonzales attacked the victim several times, pushing her down on the bed, and attempted to remove her clothing. The victim fought back, and Gonzales finally relented and left the room.

After attacking the first victim, Gonzales returned to the memory care side of the facility where he turned his attention to a 90-year-old female resident with dementia. He walked the second victim to

a storage closet, locked the victim inside, and performed lewd acts on the victim before staff started knocking on the door.

On October 16, 2020, Gonzales crawled through the doggy door of a Camarillo house, surprising the homeowner. Gonzales was told to leave but refused. He wandered around the house until a deputy with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office arrived. Gonzales was arrested and transported to jail. He was released from custody later that evening and picked up by family. They allowed Gonzales to stay the night at their home in Camarillo. That night, a six-year-old girl was having her first sleepover with the family's daughter.

Around 5:00 a.m. on October 17, 2020, family members heard loud banging noises coming from the room where the two young girls were sleeping. A teenager in the home was the first to investigate and saw Gonzales violently beating and choking the six-year-old victim in her sleeping bag. The teenager rushed at Gonzales, knocking him off the victim. The parents at the home held Gonzales down and 911 was called. When deputies arrived, the young victim was in and out of consciousness, her face was bloodied, and swollen. She was taken to a local hospital. She survived the attack but suffered brain trauma.

Gonzales is scheduled to be sentenced on September 25, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. in courtroom 14 of the Ventura County Superior Court. He is expected to receive 16 years 8 months in state prison.

Case: 2020029915

Defendant Information:

Joel James Gonzales (DOB 02/11/96)
Ventura

Charges convicted of by jury:

- PC 664/187(a) – Attempted murder
- PC 220(b) – Assault with intent to commit rape during a burglary
- PC 602.5(b) – Aggravated trespass

Charge pled guilty to:

- PC 288(c)(2) – Lewd act on dependent adult

Special Allegations:

- PC 12022.7(a) – Great bodily injury in commission of felony
- CRC 4.421(a)(1) – The crime involved great violence
- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable
- CRC 4.421(a)(11) – The defendant took advantage of a position of trust

