

Foster-home leader accused of molestation

Dennis Wagner, USA TODAY 12:38 a.m. EDT November 1, 2013

Bradley S. Bieganski operates a home for low-income Native American girls.



(Photo: Mark Henle, *The Arizona Republic*)

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PHOENIX -- A minister who operates a Christian foster home in Arizona for low-income Native American girls has been indicted on charges that he molested two Apache children during stays at his residence.

Bradley S. Bieganski, 57, of Pinedale advertises on the Internet that his non-profit organization, known as Kingdom Flight, is "designed to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of indigenous children in remote areas. ... We believe in demonstrating Christ's love through our actions by meeting physical needs and by building long-term relationships."

According to Navajo County sheriff's records and a grand-jury indictment, Bieganski was arrested in September after a school official in the White Mountain Apache community of Cibecue filed a complaint.

A sheriff's report says two girls of elementary-school age reported that Bieganski had touched their private areas while they were bathing and alleged that he had done the same to other children. The report says the girls were "allegedly once foster children" of Bieganski and his wife, Lesli. It says the couple frequently visits the Fort Apache Reservation, taking toys and books for children and obtaining permission to take them back to Kingdom Flight Ranch.

The sheriff's report says Bieganski told investigators he was licensed with the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache tribes, as well as the Navajo Nation. The status of his licensing by the tribes could not be independently ascertained, however.

Six additional Apache girls were living at Kingdom Flight Ranch near Pinedale when Bieganski was arrested. According to the sheriff's report, an investigator who interviewed the children suspected additional molestations, and all were removed from the compound by Child Protective Services.

Efforts to reach Bieganski's lawyer and his wife were unsuccessful. The sheriff's report says Bieganski denied molesting the girls and said he had instructed them on "good touch, bad touch."

"He told me that he is a father to those girls and he would never do anything sexual to them," a deputy wrote.

The sheriff's report says CPS gave detectives several records of prior contacts and interviews.

In response to a request for information on Kingdom Flight's foster-care and CPS records, Arizona Department of Economic Security officials issued a brief letter Thursday saying a foster-home license was issued in 2011 but revoked on Oct. 23 — after Bieganski's arrest.

The DES letter says the action was based on a statute that provides for license revocation of an individual who is convicted or awaiting trial on charges that, upon conviction, would require registration as a sex offender. The agency said all other information requested by *The Arizona Republic* is confidential.

Wagner also reports for The Arizona Republic

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