



## Red Bluff man details path to innocence

By *Amber Sandhu* of the Redding Record Searchlight

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Larry Pohlschneider served 15 years behind bars at Corcoran State Prison for a crime he did not commit. But thanks to the Northern California Innocence Project, he's a free man.

On Saturday afternoon, the 48-year-old Red Bluff man was at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Redding, where 40 people had gathered to hear his story. The local chapter of the ACLU hosted the meeting.

"I knew I was going to be proven innocent, eventually," he said. He just didn't know how long it would take.



In 2001, a Tehama County jury convicted Pohlschneider of sexually abusing three of his stepchildren, all who later recanted their stories.

The children had initially named Albert Harris, their biological father, as their abuser, said Maitreya Badami, assistant legal director of the Northern California Innocence Project.

Around the time the abuse was discovered, Harris had left California for Oklahoma.

But a physician's assistant's report stated that according to the physical examination on one of the victims, the abuse appeared to be more recent. It led

Red Bluff police to conducting extensive interviews with the children, where they were pressured to accuse Pohlschneider of the abuse, Badami said.

At the time of the accusation, Pohlschneider was undergoing chemotherapy treatment for testicular cancer. And although he maintained his innocence, he ended up with a 24-year sentence, based on the medical report.

"I honestly believed if you were innocent, you had nothing to fear. I don't believe that anymore," Pohlschneider said.

Pohlschneider's defense attorney at the time, Thomas Hilligan, failed to challenge the medical evidence, ask for pictures, or consult another doctor about the trauma, Badami said. When Badami contacted Hilligan to go over Pohlschneider's case, she said Hilligan had no memory of the trial, she said.

Hilligan resigned from the California State Bar in 2008 and no longer practices law.

"I hear a lot of people say the system is broken," Pohlschneider said. "In all honesty, I don't think it really worked in the first place."

He said there were occasions where he could have lost his life in prison. But more than anything he worried about his biological daughter and stepchildren. "This wasn't just done to me," he said. "I did the hard part. I did the time."

He talked about the brutality of prison, and said it was nothing like the television show "Orange Is The New Black."

At one point he teared up. "I pretty much owe my life to Maitreya and the Northern California Innocence Project," he said.

Pohlschneider gained his release from prison in October 2015.

In November 2015, Tehama County Superior Court Judge Matthew McGlynn said Pohlschneider deserved monetary compensation for his time served in prison. The

amount was calculated at \$750,000, which is \$140 a day and tax-free under California law.

Although Pohlschneider wants to leave California, he said he'll stay to take care of his elderly parents and ease into life "on the outside." He joked that when he went to prison, people were still using "flip phones and pagers" and the Internet was still fairly new.

"I'm still adjusting. The world I came from, in no way does it fit in this world," he said.

A cake was presented to Pohlschneider, as it was a day before his birthday, and his first celebration in 15 years. After his talk, people came to him to donate money. Badami said she will setup a GoFundMe account for Pohlschneider while he awaits monetary compensation.

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