Written by BILL SCHANEN IV
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Port 16-year-old who stole handgun from house spared prison but gets jail, probation with no-contact provision

A 16-year-old Port Washington teenager who broke into a house and stole a handgun was spared time in prison but will spend the summer in the county jail.

Then he better start looking for new friends.

After withholding a prison sentence during a hearing Tuesday, Ozaukee County Circuit Judge Sandy Williams placed Joshua J. Young on probation for three years, then asked him who his friends are.

Young, whose rationale for having a felony record at such a young age includes hanging around with a bad crowd and drug or alcohol use, named six friends. His parents added another name.

Williams ordered him not to have contact with the friends he named for the duration of his probation.

Young, who was 15 when he committed his crimes and was waived into adult court, pleaded no contest to a felony count of burglary becoming armed with a dangerous weapon for the Feb. 21 burglary of a house not far from his home on Port Washington's west side.

As a condition of probation, Williams ordered Young, who has been in jail awaiting a resolution to his case, to remain there until Sept. 1.

"Then you'll have a couple of days to get ready for school," Williams said.

Young also pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of concealing stolen property and guilty to misdemeanor marijuana possession in connection with the Feb. 21 burglary.

In addition, he pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of theft and concealing stolen property for what he called "car shopping," or stealing items, mainly electronics, from cars. Police discovered the stolen items while investigating the burglary.

Williams placed him on probation for two years for the misdemeanors.

Four other misdemeanor charges were dismissed as part of a plea agreement.

"You're not unfamiliar to me, Mr. Young," Williams said, referring to Young's juvenile record.

In response to questions from the judge, Young acknowledged he had appeared before Williams about a month before the burglary on a juvenile charge. He recalled that he apologized

and said he wouldn't break the law again.

"A thief and a person not of his word — that's you, Mr. Young," Williams said.

Williams, who ordered Young to comply with a long list of probation conditions that includes not having contact with the victims of the burglary and performing 500 hours of community service, reminded him what would happen if he violated any of those rules.

"If you screw up, whether it's me or another judge, they will not hesitate to send you to prison because you have proven yourself worthy," Williams said. "Isn't that sad? At age 16, you've proven yourself worthy of prison."

Between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Feb. 21, Young broke into a house on Portview Drive. In addition to a handgun, he stole about $120 in cash and collectible coins.

It took police only a day to trace the burglary to Young, whose house they searched on Feb. 22. In addition to finding the stolen gun, cash and collector coins, officers found a laptop computer and accessories, video camera and GPS unit that were stolen from unlocked vehicles.

Although Young was facing a maximum prison sentence of 15 years on the burglary conviction alone, Assistant District Attorney Jeff Sisley and Young's lawyer, public defender Adrian Renner, argued that he should be placed on probation rather than sent to prison because of his age and the fact he didn't contest the prosecution's effort to waive him into adult court.

Renner also pointed out that Young took responsibility for his crimes and sought a quick resolution to his cases.

In a calm voice, Young told Williams, "I fully understand how horrible the crime I committed is. I understand I violated the security of this family. I understand they probably hate me, but I'm sorry for what I did."

Williams said she had considered a far more serious punishment for Young.

"While Mr. Sisley wasn't considering a prison sentence, I was," she said. "You have no clue how important someone's home is to them. You haven't been a father doing whatever he can to protect his family.

"There's a saying that a man's home is his castle. That's the only place we can all retreat to ... and you violated that for this family."

According to the other conditions of Young's probation, he must pay $1,341 in restitution and $1,240 in court costs, not possess, use or be around alcohol or non-prescribed drugs, undergo an alcohol and drug assessment and submit to random drug and alcohol tests.