Teen’s Fictitious Tale of Rape has Real Consequences

Girl Who Made Up Rape Story Agrees to Community Service
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The girl who cried wolf in the Palos Heights rape case has agreed to do community service as penance, her attorney said Saturday as the public reacted with a mixture of sympathy and outrage to news that a hoax was behind one of the Southland’s biggest criminal investigations.
Police officially closed their investigation into the alleged Sept. 16 abduction and rape of the 17-year-old Stagg High School senior Friday afternoon after the girl confessed to fabricating the story.

Her family released a statement offering their “deepest apologies” to the community Friday. Rumors that her story was untrue had circulated openly for two weeks.

Her original allegation that she had been kidnapped from T.J. Grinders sandwich shop in the 12200 block of South Harlem Avenue and subjected to a three-hour sexual ordeal at knifepoint by an “olive-skinned” man prompted an estimated $250,000 police probe, provoked widespread fear and stoked anti-Arab sentiment in the diverse neighborhood.

Speaking Saturday, her family’s attorney, Martin Dolan, said the girl and her family “understand the anger that this has caused.”

In an apparent reference to the anti-Arab feelings stirred by her false claims, Dolan said the family was particularly sorry “for any ill feelings this has caused against particular ethnic groups,” stressing that the fallout was “entirely unintentional.”

Once the girl, who is “suffering from some pretty serious emotional problems” has completed counseling and is “back on her feet,” she will volunteer with the village, Dolan said.

“The family is extremely remorseful,” he said. “This was an immature kid who made a very big error of judgment and never intended for this to rise to the level it did.”

Police accepted the offer of community service when the girl confessed Friday, Dolan said.

Detective Dave Delaney said he believed the family -- who were not at home Friday night or Saturday -- were “doing everything they can to make this thing right.”

“They’re going through a pretty tough time right now,” Delaney said.
Community service at the police department normally includes chores like washing squad cars, weeding the lawn and flowerbeds and non-sensitive paperwork, Delaney said.

The Cook County State’s Attorney’s office said Friday they will not charge the girl or pursue her family for the cost of the investigation.

Dolan said the family never could hope to pay for the cost of the investigation but that they hoped their daughter’s contrition would be demonstrated by her service.

“The community service is never going to make up for some of the anger that may exist, but to punish this girl with criminal charges that makes it impossible to get a job when she is older isn’t going to help,” he said.

A team of 30 detectives had worked around the clock with the South Suburban Major Crimes Task Force to search for the alleged rapist in the immediate aftermath of the girl’s report.