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Findlay Y finds sex offender on staff Criminal checks to be done in future

By **JENNIFER FEEHAN**
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Findlay YMCA officials say criminal background checks will now be standard for individuals applying for directors' jobs at the Y after they learned that a man hired in May as aquatics director was a registered sex offender in Iowa.

Thomas Stombaugh, 51, of Sioux City was let go Sept. 24 after he was confronted by YMCA Executive Director Russ Gartner and admitted to his previous crimes. Mr. Gartner said he had checked Mr. Stombaugh's references before hiring him but had not done a criminal background check on him.

In September he learned that Mr. Stombaugh had been convicted of indecent exposure in Sioux City in 1997 and had been charged with the same offense again last January.

"I had a call from a friend of the family who just wanted to inform me that Tom had an emotional problem and that as a result of that he had an arrest record," Mr. Gartner said. "His emotional problems drove him to some very bizarre behavior."

In the first case, he was seen running around a neighborhood wearing just a baseball cap and tennis shoes. In the second, witnesses said he had exposed his genitals to passing cars.

As aquatics director, Mr. Stombaugh was in charge of all swimming-related programming, including swim lessons, lifesaving classes, and water exercise programs. His job was primarily administrative, Mr. Gartner said, although he spent about 20 percent of his time in the pool.

During his five months of employment, the YMCA never received a complaint

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about Mr. Stombaugh, Mr. Gartner said.

"Actually he was a very good employee," Mr. Gartner said. "He had done an extensive amount of volunteer work with the YMCA, Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, and other not-for-profits in his home

town for 20 years."

Mr. Gartner said the YMCA does background checks on its child-care staff and always checks references on other employees.

Now, he says, he will be running background checks on those being considered for any of the 11 director's jobs at the Y.

"As soon as we realized that we have a vulnerability that we didn't identify before, we decided as a board and as a staff that we needed to take these precautionary measures," Mr. Gartner said.

Mr. Stombaugh has returned to Iowa.

He is listed on Iowa's Sex Offender Registry with an address in Sioux City.

Contact Jennifer Feehan at:
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