

Cell phone thief sentenced

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La Plata, MD - James Diente Taylor AKA Jerry Diente Simmons, 22 of Washington, D.C. has second thoughts about a life of crime.

He told Charles County Circuit Court Judge Helen I. Harrington that "she would never see him in court again."

The judge wasn't buying it.

She sentenced Simmons to 10 years in the Maryland Department of Corrections with all but one year suspended for conspiracy to commit theft under \$10,000.

Charles County Assistant State's Attorney John Stackhouse told the court Simmons also had a theft conviction in Virginia and served some time.

"He now has a minor record," Stackhouse explained, adding that changed the guidelines for sentencing.

"The defendant and his co-defendant went into multiple stores and ripped cell phones from display cases," he added. "Unfortunately for the defendant, there was an off-duty Metropolitan Police officer who saw them and called 911."

After a high-speed chase, Stackhouse said multiple cell phones were found in the car when police stopped them.

"I will say this," Stackhouse said. "He is taking responsibility for this plea. I would ask you to sentence him by the guidelines."

"My client admitted his involvement in this case," defense attorney Jonathan Haskell told the court. "He was incarcerated. That is why he missed his last sentencing date, because he was incarcerated for three months."

"He has changed," Haskell said. "He's trying to better himself. He managed to find a job and he volunteers for a council member in Ward 8 in Washington, DC. He has a girlfriend and a new baby and they are present in the courtroom."

"I was narrow-minded when this happened," Simmons said. "I realize it's not worth it, that anything I want I have to work for."

Harrington then sentenced Simmons to the 10 years with all but one year suspended, adding she would give him credit for 81 days already served. She tacked on the requirement that he take part in the jail-based drug treatment program and told him he would be on four years of supervised probation upon his release.

She added that she would reserve on restitution and that Simmons must enter an alcohol and drug treatment program and to participate in two self-help groups a week. She also barred him from entering any T-Mobile or Sprint stores in the Waldorf area.

"Nobody likes a thief," she told him.

The court security officer allowed Simmons to hold his baby and kiss his girlfriend goodbye before she put him in handcuffs to be led away.

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