

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Andrea Smith  
Rhine Law Firm, P.C.  
1612 Military Cutoff Road  
Suite 300  
Wilmington, NC 28403  
(910) 772-9960  
E-mail: [ars@rhinelawfirm.com](mailto:ars@rhinelawfirm.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2019

**JOINT STATEMENT FROM ATTORNEYS REPRESENTING VICTIMS  
OF THE NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS SEX ABUSE CASES**

Wilmington, NC - Our firms represent several victims of sexual abuse that occurred at local New Hanover County Schools within the last two decades. The most recent reports follow the sentencing of former science teacher Mike Kelly to as many as 31 years on multiple charges by a New Hanover County Superior Court Judge. Over the years, Kelly taught at local high schools including Laney High and Isaac Bear Early College High School.

On behalf of our clients, we are working diligently to conduct an independent civil investigation into the facts, one separate from that being conducted by law enforcement and/or the school system. Our focus is on whether anyone employing Kelly knew of his behavior and should bear any responsibility within our civil justice system to our clients. Because our investigation is ongoing, we have asked our clients to refrain from making public comment on the issues until such time as we can reach a conclusion to our investigation.

We would simply ask that the media respect the privacy of our clients and the sensitive nature of the injuries involved. Many of our clients are reliving their injuries as a result of recent news coverage. Victims are still coming forward.

We ask that you provide your readers and viewers with access to the following, helpful resources on sexual abuse and assault to assist individuals who have been victimized sexually by others.

- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#), tel.: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673). This group connects victims of sexual assaults to sexual assault service providers in their community.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#), tel. : 1-800-273-8255. This group provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources.

As soon as our investigation concludes, we will be available for further comment. Thanks for your understanding and consideration during this difficult time for our community. Our thoughts are with the victims of this horrible tragedy.

Jim Lea  
Ryan Schultz  
The Lea/Schultz Law Firm, P.C.

Joel Rhine  
Martin Ramey  
Rhine Law Firm, P.C.