

# 85 more charges filed against Berwyn teacher

BY RUMMANA HUSSAIN

Staff Reporter

Berwyn elementary school band teacher Robert Sperlik has been hit with an additional 85 counts of child sex abuse charges involving the first five victims whom he allegedly duct-taped before fondling, according to a Cook County grand jury indictment.

Although authorities expect more victims to come forward, to date, Sperlik, 45, is accused of molesting 16 former female students while teaching in the South Berwyn School District 100. By last week, there were 24 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse, aggravated kidnapping, kidnapping and unlawful restraint charges filed against Sperlik for the alleged attacks that took place between 1998 and 2003.

But based on Wednesday's indictment, the North Riverside man now faces an additional 52 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse, 19 counts of indecent solicitation of a child, five counts of aggravated kidnapping, four counts of kidnapping and five counts of unlawful restraint, state's attorney spokeswoman Marcy Jensen said.

All the new counts involve the first five girls who were interviewed by police in January, leading to Sperlik's arrest and

dismissal from the district.

Sperlik is accused of tying many of his victims with rope and binding them with duct tape. At times, Sperlik would ask the 9- to 14-year-old girls to bind themselves and each other to imitate poses from his collection of bondage videos, authorities said.

## Suspect's lawyer seeks gag order

During Wednesday's court hearing in Maywood, Sperlik's attorney William Hedrick requested a gag order to keep prosecutors and police from speaking publicly about the case. Hedrick pointed to the Berwyn Police, accusing them of "mob action" and intimidating his client by "parading" him before the press. "They used my client as a prop in a dog-and-pony show," said Hedrick, flanked by Sperlik's relatives. A judge is expected to rule Monday on the gag order.

Hedrick also blasted Berwyn Public Safety Director Frank Marzullo for distributing a letter about the investigation to Berwyn residents this week. The one-page letter assumes Sperlik is guilty and questions the credibility and honesty of key defense witnesses, creating the possibility of a tainted jury pool, Hedrick said. Hedrick says he will file a motion seeking a change of venue for the criminal trial.

Part of the letter reads: "I believe



**Robert Sperlik**

*Lawyer rips police for "mob action"*

that this case is an isolated occurrence and that the arrest of the band teacher, Robert Sperlik, Jr., should put an end to this behavior. We also recognize that the arrest and subsequent prosecution of Mr. Sperlik, Jr. cannot put an end to the emotional trauma suffered by the young victims of his conduct. . . . It is critical that we also determine exactly what school officials knew of this behavior, when they were informed of it, and why it was not reported to the proper authorities immediately."

## Letter to residents defended

Marzullo said the letter was mailed to answer the public's questions and quell fear.

"They deserve to know some of the basics of what has been transpiring. . . . If this happened in a park, I'd do the same thing," he said.

Also Wednesday, the family of another victim filed a federal lawsuit against Sperlik and accusing District 100 officials of concealing the alleged abuse.

The girl, now 14, was also duct-taped and molested in the 2002 incidents, said attorney **Jon Loevy**, who represents the families of two other victims who filed similar lawsuits in federal court this month.