

Missionary accused of child abuse

Ex-Aurora sisters allege '70s assaults

By Art Barnum

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Two sisters who grew up in Aurora across the street from a Roman Catholic mission have filed a lawsuit saying that a brother from the order sexually molested both of them for a number of years when they were children.

The head of the organization, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, said Thursday that the accused, a 68-year-old member of the order, has been reassigned to a different location in Illinois.

"We don't know if the allegations are true, but we are taking precautions," said Rev. Mark McDonald, provincial of the order. "There are orders that he is not to have any unsupervised conduct with children."

McDonald said that the allegations against Brother Richard Kuhl came to his attention last summer and that Kuhl received psychological testing and spent several months at a treatment center.

The two sisters are now 31

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and 28, one living in Chicago's western suburbs and one in Wisconsin. Joseph Klest, their attorney, said that as children they were befriended by Kuhl, a familiar figure in the Aurora neighborhood around the mission at 305 S. Lake St.

The lawsuit charges that the 28-year-old woman was molested about twice a week from age 4 to 8, and that the other woman was molested once or twice a week for seven years from the time she was

4.

Klest contended that both suffered psychological damage and that one of the women has attempted suicide. He also said that the older sister remembers the alleged molestation and brought it up to her sister, who Klest said had repressed the memory.

"The girls, who are both unmarried and have no children, confronted Kuhl last summer and he admitted that the incidents occurred," Klest said.

McDonald said that he knows of no other allegations against Kuhl, a member of the order for 41 years.