

Middle school principal gets charged with endangering child welfare

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Geneva Middle School Principal John DeFazio is facing charges after police allege he had an inappropriate encounter with a child.

DeFazio, 48, of Greece, was charged with endangering the welfare of a child, a misdemeanor, in connection with an incident on Oct. 5 involving a child younger than 17 at the Middle School, 101 Carter Road, Geneva, according to Geneva Police Chief Michael Passalacqua.

Police did not share further details. According to a statement from Geneva City School District, police first alerted district officials to the allegations on Oct. 22. DeFazio was immediately put on leave while police officers conducted an investigation, according to district officials.

“We take the type of allegations at issue very seriously and cooperated with the police throughout the process. We are committed to the safety of our students and expect all staff to adhere to the highest ethical practices and conduct.”

DeFazio started at the district in July, replacing Bob Smith, who became the district’s director of facilities.

Until this summer, DeFazio spent his career in the Rochester City School District, most recently as an assistant principal at Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School No. 19 on Seward Street. He oversaw middle school students at the multi-age school. He worked full time at the district since 2001.

Before that, he served as vice principal at Rochester’s East High School, program administrator at East High School Foundation Academy and instructional coach at East High School. He started his career as a social studies teacher at East and Marshall high schools.

Tricia Budgar, the district’s director of athletics and strategic initiatives, is serving as the acting principal at Geneva Middle School. The school houses about 470 students, in sixth through eighth grades, according to the district’s website.

DeFazio is the second Geneva administrator to be placed on leave this academic year. Last month, district Superintendent Patricia Garcia was placed on leave following a complaint that contains allegations regarding Garcia’s management of personnel. An outside investigator is evaluating the claims. Kathleen Davis is serving as Geneva’s acting superintendent.

In April, Hilton elementary principal Kirk Ashton was charged over the alleged sexual abuse of students in cases that go back decades.

Anyone who may have had an inappropriate encounter with DeFazio is asked to contact Geneva Police Detective Matthew Colton at 315-828-6779 or mkc@geneva.ny.us.

Contact Victoria Freile at yfreile@gannett.com. Follow her on Twitter @yfreile and Instagram @yfreile. This coverage is only possible with support from our readers.



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Saturday, 10/30/2021 Page .A02

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