

# Former Student Files Sexual Abuse Lawsuit Against The Thacher School

*Lawsuit Alleges She Was Sexually Abused During Her High School Years by a Thacher School Counselor and Coach*

LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, November 30, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Jennifer Christiansen Vurno, a former high school student at The Thacher School in Ojai, California and her attorneys Paul Mones and Courtney Kiehl announced today that she has sued the school alleging she was sexually assaulted on numerous occasions by John Friborg. Friborg was employed as a counselor, coach, and administrator at the prestigious school. The lawsuit, filed in the Ventura County Superior Court, alleges that the Thacher School failed to protect Ms. Vurno from sexual abuse and harassment (Case Number 56-2022-00569736-CU-MC-VTA)



Thacher School Sexual Abuse Lawsuit News Conference

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I share my name openly in this lawsuit to shed the dark cloak of shame and isolation that devours survivors of child sexual abuse and to encourage others to step forward to seek justice.”

*Jennifer Christiansen Vurno*

Ms. Christiansen Vurno alleges that she first met Friborg in his capacity as a soccer coach and counselor in or around 1993. In the lawsuit, Ms. Christiansen Vurno alleges that Friborg’s sexual abuse occurred on numerous occasions in the winter and spring of 1996, on campus both in his home and in his vehicle.

According to a June 2021 [investigative report](#) commissioned by The Thacher School Board of Trustees and undertaken by Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, Friborg worked at the school from the fall of 1987 through July

1997 when he resigned from his counseling, coaching, and teaching positions after three former female students reported his sexual abuse. The Investigative Report confirms that Thacher School administrators, including the Headmaster, were aware that Friborg was asked to leave the Governor’s School in Massachusetts where he worked prior to Thacher as a result of an

inappropriate relationship with a female student on the school's soccer team. In the Munger, Tolles & Olson report, Thacher Head of School Michael Mulligan is reported telling investigators that: "he regrets that he supported Friborg's hiring" and that "he wishes he had worked to prevent the hiring and very much regrets that he did not do so." (Report, p. 14). The report also documented that during his time at Thacher, administrators learned of concerns of Friborg's boundary-crossing behavior with female students. The report can be found at: <https://www.thacher.org/explore/special-committee-report>.

The lawsuit alleges that Thacher failed to supervise Friborg in his position of trust and authority, so that he was able to commit these wrongful acts and that the school failed to take reasonable measures to prevent sexual harassment, molestation, and sexual assault of minors, including Ms. Christiansen Vurno. The lawsuit also alleges Thacher had no system or procedures in place to reasonably investigate, supervise, and monitor teachers/coaches, including Friborg, to prevent grooming, sexual harassment, or sexual assault of children, and did not implement a system or procedure to oversee or monitor conduct by teachers/coaches toward minors and students in their care even after receiving reports from students and parents about Friborg's behavior.

In the overwhelming majority of cases filed under California's 2019 statute which gave adults like Ms. Christiansen Vurno a three year revival window to file lawsuits involving their childhood sexual abuse (The law expires on December 31, 2022), Plaintiffs choose to remain anonymous and file their cases as Jane Doe or John Doe.

"I believe it is important to share my face and name in my lawsuit so that the full story about what happened to me and the harm done to me and other Thacher students is put out in the open to hopefully encourage others to step forward to seek justice, said Ms. Christiansen Vurno. "Additionally, I share my name to shed the dark cloak of shame and isolation that devours survivors of child sexual abuse. I was a child, John Friborg, was my 40 year old coach and mentor. He stole everything from me and the school did nothing. The school must be held accountable."

Attorney Paul Mones said, "We are privileged to represent our brave client for coming out publicly to seek justice and tell her story. The failure of Thacher to protect her and other girls from on-going sexual abuse was outrageous and has impacted Jennifer for years."

The lawsuit also alleges a violation of provisions of the Penal Code known as The Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act ("CANRA.") highlighting the provisions of Penal Code section 11166 which designates employees, staff, volunteers, coaches, and agents of the school to be at all times "mandated reporters" of suspected child abuse. Under CANRA, these individuals were legally obligated to personally report reasonably suspected incidents of child abuse to the police and/or child protective services. The lawsuit states that school administration and staff had or should have had a reasonable suspicion that Friborg was engaging in sexual misconduct or abuse of Plaintiff yet failed to report the suspected abuse to authorities in violation of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, Penal Code section 11166.

[The Complaint](#) asks for a jury trial appropriate statutory damages and costs. The filed complaint can be found at this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/0z2ihywq69o5w3e/Final%20Complaint%20-%20Jennifer%20Christiansen%20Vurno.pdf?dl=0>

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