

Plainfield man sentenced to 16 years for attack on police officer

A Plainfield man has been sentenced to 16 years in state prison for brutally attacking a police officer without warning on a city street in 2012, acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park announced Wednesday.

Andre Henderson, who was 35 at the time of the attack, must serve at least 85 percent of the sentence prior to becoming eligible for parole, according to the terms set down by state Superior Court Judge Robert J. Mega.

The date was March 11, 2012 when Henderson encountered then-60-year-old Plainfield police officer Israel Valentin as the officer exited his vehicle to mail a letter to his daughter at the downtown post office, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor Nathan Hewette-Guyton, who prosecuted the case. Without warning, Henderson punched the officer in the head, knocking him to the ground, and started kicking him in the torso and stomping on the officer's head, Hewette-Guyton said.

A passerby traveling through the area with his wife and children, Miguel Garcia, witnessed the incident, grabbed his daughter's softball bat out of his vehicle, and started hitting Henderson with it in an attempt to bring the attack to a halt, according to the investigation. Two other good Samaritans in the area also helped Garcia distract Henderson until backup patrol units arrived, at which time he was immediately arrested. Garcia and the other witnesses all testified during the three-week trial, which concluded with a Union County jury returning guilty verdicts in October 2014.

Valentin, a 30-year veteran of the Plainfield Police Division,

suffered five broken ribs and a brain bleed as a result of the attack. He spent several days in the hospital and was able to return to light duty following five months of rehabilitation. He remains on the force today.