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Counselors found not guilty of neglect in group-home case

By **MICHAEL DEAK**
Staff Writer

SOMERVILLE — Two counselors have been found not guilty of neglecting a resident of a Hillsborough group home in 2006.

Sam Njorge, 29, of North Plainfield and Ben Imbayi Akengo, 29, of East Brunswick were found not guilty Thursday, Jan. 15, after a Somerset County jury deliberated for seven hours. The trial had lasted six days before Superior Court Judge Edward Coleman.

Dennis Waweru, 32, of Sayreville, the third defendant in the case brought by the state Attorney General's Office, had previously

been admitted into a pre-trial intervention program. If Waweru successfully completes the program, all charges will be dismissed against him.

The indictment, handed up by a Somerset County grand jury on Feb. 22, 2008, charged the three, all formerly employed as residential counselors at the Devereaux Group Home on Mountain View Road in Hillsborough, neglected a disabled adult male on Oct. 19, 2006, and did not fulfill their legal duty to care for him.

The state charged the three knew the resident had suffered bruises and contusions to his face and

lower body, but failed to provide the necessary medical attention.

Vincent Sanzone Jr., an Elizabeth-based attorney representing Njorge, said he presented witnesses during the trial who testified his client, who is completing his nursing degree at Union County College, was not present in the group home when the resident was injured.

Sanzone said he also presented cell phone records to show Njorge was not at the facility during the time of the incident.

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