

allied cab shooting

Judge upholds teen's 53-year sentence

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A Lynchburg judge Friday upheld a 53-year sentence imposed by a jury against a 17-year-old boy convicted of shooting a man in the head in a 2007 gang confrontation.

Judge Leyburn Mosby ruled the

late-January sentencing recommendation was fair in spite of the boy's age.

That jury found Shandre Saunders guilty of aggravated malicious wounding, use of a firearm in commission of a felony and participation in a crimi-



Saunders

nal street gang.

According to evidence presented during the trial, then 43-year-old Allied Cab driver Greg Powell was shot in the head on Sept. 7, 2007, by Saunders as Powell drove his cab down 12th Street near the intersection of Garfield Avenue.

According to testimony, Saunders,

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a member of the Bloods street gang, intended to shoot rival gang members in the Sunoco parking lot across the street when Powell was struck, crashing his cab into a tree.

During the trial, Powell's father, George Gunn, testified his son is partially paralyzed, has trouble communicating and is "working with half a brain."

David Embrey, Saunders' lawyer, asked the judge to reduce the boy's prison time, noting Saunders was 15 at the time of the shooting.

Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Chuck Felmlee, however, argued that Saunders was a danger to the community.

By age 15, Saunders racked up a series of misdemeanor assault and battery convictions against school workers and others. Two months before shooting Powell, he had himself been shot in the leg in a drive-by shooting on Campbell Avenue, but refused to cooperate with police in the investigation, according to earlier testimony.

Within months of being picked up by police for a Sept. 21, 2007, shooting in a Campbell Avenue apartment, exactly two weeks after he shot Powell, he was kicked out of the Lynchburg Juvenile Detention Home for threatening staff and fellow detainees, according to testimony at the trial.

He subsequently was convicted of shooting into the apartment, a felony.

Since being transferred to the Lynchburg Adult Detention Center, he spent the majority of his time in

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- **Chuck Felmlee,**
Deputy Commonwealth's
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maximum-security confinement, a jail official testified. Among his disciplinary problems in jail, Saunders stabbed another inmate with a pen.

"Anyone willing to act this reckless, firing a gun across a street into a crowd of people, striking a passing motorist in the head, and then using the same gun two weeks later to shoot up a house on Campbell Avenue, this kind of individual needs to be taken out of commission for good," Felmlee said. "That is what the jury, and now the judge, have done."

The prosecutor said he hopes this sends a message. If someone participates in a shooting, there's a good chance that person will spend the rest of his or her life in prison, he said.

"This gang violence can not be tolerated," Felmlee said. "Having this defendant, the former leader of a local gang, imprisoned for ... pretty much the rest of his life, will hopefully convince others that the gang lifestyle is not worth it."