August 4, 2010: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Female victim testifies in robbery trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Charles "Chuck" Helvie's voice was calm as he told a 911 operator last December how he and his roommate, Heida Mass, came home and found a trio of suspected robbers in their downtown Lafayette apartment.

But his words and heavy, labored breathing relayed the fear from the severe beatings both had just endured.

"We caught them in the act. ... I can't see anything out of my eyes right now," said Helvie, who was stabbed twice in the abdomen.

A pool of blood surrounded the 44-year-old's head when emergency responders arrived.

The 911 tape was played Tuesday afternoon in Tippecanoe Circuit Court during the first day of a jury trial for two of the suspected robbers, Brian C. Smith, 26, and Quentin J. Shotwell, 27.

Both men are charged with multiple felonies, including robbery resulting in serious bodily injury; robbery while armed with a deadly weapon; battery; and burglary.

A third co-defendant, Latroy "Troy" D. Maxwell, 23, pleaded guilty in May to one count of robbery causing bodily injury. Judge Don Daniel sentenced him last month to eight years in prison and seven years on probation.

Maxwell provided information to Lafayette detectives that was crucial to the investigation. According to court documents, he is Shotwell's brother.

The charges stemmed from a break-in at Helvie and Mass' apartment at 317 S. Sixth St. on Dec. 28. Helvie and Mass, 39, had just stepped inside their apartment when they were assaulted.

"I saw two toolboxes sitting on the couch," said Mass, whose testimony began Tuesday afternoon. "Right then and there is when we knew something was wrong."

She was repeatedly punched in the head, and the blows knocked out two teeth -- one of them cut through her upper lip. Helvie also was severely beaten, according to testimony and photos from the crime scene that were shown to jurors.

"I could see Latroy standing over there beating Chuck's face into the coffee table," Mass said through tears. "I could hear Chuck yelling, 'Please stop. Please stop.'

"I saw Brian standing over me."

Mass quickly named Smith as one of the three suspects. Smith was her drug dealer and friend, said Mass, who testified to previously using crack cocaine on an everyday basis.

She alleged that Smith was angry because he gave one of Mass' friends -- someone she could identify only as "Rodney" -- money to perform some work. Mass claimed that Smith and two others had previously gotten into her apartment, reportedly by taking a spare key that was kept on a bedroom dresser.

Mass will take the stand again this morning for cross-examination by Shotwell's attorney, Patrick Manahan.

Smith is represented by attorney Brian Dekker. Questions he asked Mass on Tuesday largely focused on her credibility. For instance, Mass had originally given Lafayette investigators the name "Billie Long" because of an outstanding warrant from Colorado for violating parole.

Dekker further noted that Mass' urine on Dec. 28 contained traces of opiates and cocaine, though she claimed to last using cocaine shortly after Thanksgiving.

Deputy prosecutors Greg Loyd and Emily Orsinger are trying the case for the state.

The trial is expected to run through Thursday.

August 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Father faces neglect and drug charges

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man whose 2-year-old daughter was wandering outside alone and almost struck by a semitrailer.

Payton T. Jarrard, 24, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of neglect of a dependent, possession with intent to deal marijuana, possession of marijuana, and maintaining a common nuisance.

He also is charged with misdemeanor possession of paraphernalia.

Jarrard was being held Tuesday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

The Indiana Department of Child Services took custody of the 2-year-old.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the girl was found July 28 walking in the intersection at North Ninth and Main streets in downtown Lafayette.

A semitrailer driver -- after almost hitting the girl -- stopped, picked her up and called police. She was not able to say her name or where she lived.

Jarrard and the girl lived in the 1100 block of Main Street. Lafayette officers who were searching the area went to Jarrard's building after spotting an open door.

He apparently thought the 2-year-old was asleep.

Detective Herb Robinson of the Lafayette Police Department said the marijuana charges stemmed from bags of marijuana, a marijuana roach and other related items found in Jarrard's apartment.

A roommate, Jason Lynady, 25 also was arrested on July 28.

Robinson said investigators believe the marijuana belonged to Jarrard.

August 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen pregnancy leads to charges of misconduct

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A 20-year-old West Lafayette man is suspected of impregnating his 15-year-old girlfriend.

Ryan S. Taylor was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with three counts of sexual misconduct, a Class C felony. He was arrested Tuesday.

Investigators were contacted after the teenager's pregnancy was confirmed at a Lafayette healthcare provider, said Detective Rob Rush of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. The clinic reported her pregnancy to the Indiana Department of Child Services.

Legally, Indiana residents must be 16 and older to consent to sexual activity.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the 15-year-old told investigators that she met Taylor about four years ago at a Lafayette church.

They've been dating for about 11 months.

The girl said they'd been sexually active for several months.

She was apparently living with Taylor and his parents, and both sets of parents consented to the arrangement.

The girl told investigators that she already has applied for Medicaid and the Women, Infants and Children program to help pay for the baby.

Taylor was being held late Tuesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $12,500 surety bond.

August 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

3 face charges in wake of meth lab bust

By Justin L. Mack; jmack@jconline.com

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office filed felony charges Tuesday against three people after police discovered a meth lab on the city's south side.

Winter E. Greene, 25, Melissa A. Smart, 29 and Rodney A. Nelson, 32, were arrested the night of July 27 at 2842 Plaza Lane in Lafayette.

Smart and Nelson were charged in Tippecanoe County Superior Court with conspiracy to commit dealing methamphetamine, dealing methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession of marijuana, possession of a syringe, possession of paraphernalia, running an illegal drug lab and maintaining a common nuisance.

Smart also was charged with possession of marijuana while having a prior conviction.

Greene was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of marijuana, possession of a syringe, possession of paraphernalia, maintaining a common nuisance and possession of marijuana while having a prior conviction.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, officers went to the residence to check the well being of Greene and learned she was wanted on a warrant for failing to appear in court.

Officers also discovered an active methamphetamine lab at the residence, and arrested tenants Smart and Nelson along with Greene.

All three of the suspects have been convicted of drug-related offenses in the past.

Greene was being held without bond Tuesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail. Smart was being held on a $12,500 surety bond, and Nelson was being held on $25,000 surety bond.

July 31, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Stabbing suspect pleads guilty to lesser offense

A Lafayette man has admitted to stabbing another man in the chest during a fight last November north of downtown.

Lawrence Clayton Landreth, 31, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to criminal recklessness with a deadly weapon, a Class D felony.

If Judge Randy Williams accepts Landreth's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, the originally filed charges -- battery by means of a deadly weapon and battery resulting in bodily injury, both Class C felonies -- will be dropped.

The victim, Michael Corwin, suffered a collapsed left lung and a smaller stab wound to his cheek that required hospitalization.

According to court documents, both Landreth and Corwin told officers that they were trying to break up a large fight on Nov. 24 near Village Pantry at Sixth and Union streets.

The fight reportedly began when Landreth's brother was jumped by three men in an alley between North Sixth and Seventh streets and Landreth stepped in to help.

Landreth was found shortly after inside a van parked on Seventh Street. He claimed the stabbing was done in self-defense.

Under his plea agreement, Landreth can receive six months to three years on community corrections and probation.

If he is rejected from community corrections, Landreth will instead serve prison time.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Sept. 3.

July 30, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Driver pleads guilty in chase that ended in river

A Lafayette man has pleaded guilty to leading police from multiple agencies on a pursuit last October that ended with him in the Wabash River

Brian K. Campbell, 41, pleaded guilty Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to operating a motor vehicle after lifetime suspension and resisting law enforcement. Both counts are felonies.

He also pleaded guilty to being a habitual offender.

The charges stemmed from a series of incidents that began the night of Oct. 24 just north of downtown Lafayette, when a city police officer spotted a pickup truck that did not have its headlights on.

Campbell, the truck's driver, fled through Lafayette's north end -- at one point, ramming the officer's squad car

while trying to go in reverse.

This led to a chase into West Lafayette that ended with Campbell jumping into a retention pond connected to the Wabash River near Williamsburg apartments.

Campbell was later found near an overgrown island in the Wabash, with water about chest high.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, additional charges of battery, aggressive driving and criminal recklessness will be dropped.

Campbell will be sentenced at a later date by Judge Randy Williams.

The plea agreement does not include a recommended sentencing range.

July 29 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jailhouse tip leads to robbery conviction

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces time in prison after being found guilty Wednesday afternoon of holding up a Village Pantry convenience store two years ago.

The verdicts were returned against Michael G. Freed, 22, following a two-day trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. Freed was found guilty of robbery, a Class B felony, and theft, a Class D felony.

He will be sentenced in September by Judge Thomas Busch.

The robbery in which Freed was convicted took place on July 6, 2008, at Village Pantry, 3150 Brady Lane. A white male wearing a mask flashed a knife at the clerk and demanded money.

He got about $120 cash.

Charges were filed against Freed last October, based largely on information from two inmates at the Tippecanoe County Jail. At the time, Freed was incarcerated on a forgery conviction for violating terms of work release.

According to testimony presented Tuesday, the robbery connection was first made after Freed allegedly wanted to hire someone to murder a Lafayette couple who own an area funeral home.

Freed was accused of asking another inmate in a segregated portion of the Tippecanoe County Jail whether he knew anyone who could carry out the killings.

Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department said the funeral home owners were possible witnesses to a burglary and theft case that involved Freed and another man.

Among the evidence presented for jurors was a letter, purportedly written by Freed, that included information on where to find the funeral home owners.

At the end of the letter, the suspect wrote "check for an unsolved Village Pantry robbery in July '08" -- apparently as surety that Freed would not turn around and snitch.

The inmate later gave the letter to Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Deputy Greg Frantz, Frantz testified.

Shumaker said he followed up on the alleged murder-for-hire scheme, but not enough was available to establish a

criminal case.

A second inmate contacted police last July about Freed's possible involvement in the Village Pantry robbery.

Freed was represented by Indianapolis attorney Kimberly Robinson. Deputy Prosecutor Bradley Keffer represented the state.

The lead charge against Freed, robbery, is punishable by six to 20 years in prison.

Jurors deliberated for about two hours Wednesday before reaching their verdicts

July 29 2010: WLFI TV

Man faces 23 years in prison
Michael Freed was found guilty of robbery, theft

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. - A man faces up to 23 years in prison for robbery and theft.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Michael G. Freed was found guilty of two felonies: robbery while armed and theft.

A jury in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 2 deliberated for one and a half hours today after hearing two days of testimony.

On July 6, 2008, Freed entered the Village Pantry at Concord Road and Brady Lane in Lafayette with a knife and demanded money from the clerk. Harrington said Freed covered his face with a shirt and knit cap. He fled the scene on foot with $120.

The case went unsolved for nine months before DNA testing on clothes discarded outside the Village Pantry confirmed the identity of Freed.

Harrington said sentencing has been scheduled for September 28 at 9:30 a.m.

July 24 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect admits murder, faces 50 years
Family of still-missing man praises police, prosecutor

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Steven L. Smith, a Lafayette man last seen alive on Dec. 6, 2008, died after being struck by a padlock and knocked into the Wabash River, his former roommate has admitted.

The roommate, Wesley L. Kelly, 30, of Lafayette, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to murder -- testifying that he knew beforehand that Smith, 52, could not swim and was afraid of water.

"He came up once and went back down," Kelly said of seeing Smith in the Wabash River.

Smith's body has never been found.

But investigators with the Lafayette Police Department could soon learn more details that will help in their search.

Under Kelly's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Kelly must give a sworn, recorded

statement and tell them exactly where he knocked Smith into the water and where Kelly last saw Smith's body.

In exchange, additional charges of being a habitual offender and misdemeanor battery against Kelly will be dropped. That would shave off up to 30 years from Kelly's possible sentence.

Though it's not a guarantee that Smith's body will be found, family members say Kelly's plea brings them closer to closure.

"We're making the right steps toward getting closure ... positive steps," said his cousin, Cyndi Miller of Danville. "This opens the family up to go to the next step of grieving and getting closure."

The family is planning to start a fundraiser to help raise money for a headstone for Smith that will be placed at the cemetery where his father and grandmother are buried.

During Friday's hearing, Kelly had to provide information on what led up to Smith's murder. Here's what Kelly admitted, under questions from his attorney, Deputy Public Defender Michael Trueblood, and Prosecutor Pat Harrington:

Kelly had been living at Smith's apartment on South Fourth Street for about two months.

They were drinking with neighbors on Dec. 6, 2008, when Smith reportedly told one of them that Kelly is a sex offender -- which angered Kelly.

He admitted hitting Smith's face once they were alone, causing the back of Smith's head to strike a toilet. Kelly then cut the telephone line in the apartment because he feared Smith was going to call the police.

After calming down, the two men left the apartment and walked to Riehle Plaza. Kelly claims that Smith was contemplating suicide and that he encouraged him.

They were on the railroad bridge that runs above the Wabash River -- just south of Indiana 26 -- when Smith changed his mind. That's when Kelly struck him with a padlock that was attached to a rope.

Detectives found the padlock shortly after Smith was reported missing. Kelly said photographs of the found padlock match the one he used to hit Smith.

After watching whether Smith's body would again surface, Kelly walked back to their apartment and cleaned up blood from the fight.

According to court documents, Smith's mother told officers that her son's apartment was unusually clean and appeared as though no one was living there.

But investigators also found reddish-brown spots resembling drops of blood near a large hole in the wall of Smith's apartment, along with a dark-colored stain in the living room.

Criminal charges against Kelly were filed this past January. The prosecutor's office had waited one year to see whether people along the Wabash -- fisherman, mushroom hunters -- found any evidence linked to Smith.

Harrington said anyone who finds items such as clothing or a shoe that could be Smith's is urged to contact police.

Under his plea agreement, Kelly faces 50 to 60 years in prison -- five years shy of the maximum punishment for murder under Indiana law -- when he's sentenced on Aug. 27.

Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel will decide during that hearing whether or not to accept Kelly's plea.

Law enforcement and firefighters have searched in the Wabash River and along its banks numerous times the past 19 months for Smith's body, at times by horseback, helicopter and boat.

Several of Smith's relatives attended Friday's guilty plea hearing. Miller, the cousin, said they've kept close contact with Lafayette detectives, some of whom have spent off-duty hours searching along the Wabash.

Smith's family praised investigators and the prosecutor's office for not giving up.

"We go on in our faith and hope our story brings hope to others who have missing or other loved ones that have murdered family members," Miller said. "Let our family be a sign of hope to them -- that good things can happen.

"This community is blessed in this police department, these detectives, and their prosecutor and the prosecutor's office. Blessed."

Following Smith's disappearance, Kelly was charged with failing to register as a sex offender, to which he pleaded guilty. He currently is in the Indiana Department of Correction for that offense and for the remainder of a 2000 burglary conviction out of Tippecanoe County, which was ordered because he violated probation.

July 23 2010: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for dealing drugs
Shane Kervin sentenced to 22 years in prison

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County man faces 22 years in prison for dealing cocaine.

Shane Kervin was found guilty in a jury trial last month for dealing and possessing cocaine.

He was sentenced today to 30 years in prison. 22 of those will be served in the Department of Corrections and Kervin will spend the remaining eight years on probation.

He was charged after an October incident where undercover officers in the Lafayette Street Crimes Unit purchased cocaine from Kervin.

July 23 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect admits to missing Lafayette man's murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man has admitted to murdering his former roommate by striking his friend with a padlock and knocking him into the Wabash River 18 months ago.

Wesley E. Kelly, 30, pleaded guilty this afternoon to murder in the Dec. 6, 2008, death of Steven L. Smith, 52.

He faces 50 to 60 years in prison when he's sentenced Aug. 27 by Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

At the time, Kelly had been living at Smith's apartment on South Fourth Street for about two months. They were drinking with neighbors on Dec. 6 when Smith reportedly told one of them that Kelly is a sex offender.

In response to questions asked by his attorney, Deputy Public Defender Michael Trueblood, Kelly admitted that he struck Smith, causing Smith's head to strike a toilet.

He then cut the telephone line in the apartment because he feared Smith was going to call the police.

Both men then left the apartment and walked to Riehle Plaza before walking onto the railroad bridge that runs above the Wabash River.

Kelly claims that Smith was contemplating suicide and that he encouraged him.

"We both walked out on the bridge," Kelly said.

But Smith, who cannot swim and is afraid of water, then changed his mind. That's when Kelly struck him with a padlock that was attached to a rope.

"He came up once and went back down," Kelly said.

Under Kelly's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, if Daniel accepts the plea, additional charges of misdemeanor battery and being a habitual offender would be dropped.

Kelly also must give a sworn, recorded statement and tell investigators exactly where Smith's body fell into the Wabash. Smith's body has never been recovered.

Murder has a penalty range of 45 to 65 years in Indiana. His plea agreement calls for 50 to 60 years.

Had Kelly gone to trial and been convicted of being a habitual offender, he would have faced up to 30 more years.

Smith's cousin, Cyndi Miller of Danville, said the plea brings the family closer to closure.

July 23 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

30 years after murder, 'it's over'

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Dion Watkins chose not to testify Thursday morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 before learning his punishment for fatally stabbing another man 30 years ago at a Lafayette hotel.

But two words he quietly muttered at the end of the 30-minute sentencing hearing effectively summed up the cold case homicide for the parties involved:

“It’s over.”

Judge Randy Williams sentenced Watkins to 18 years in prison, just two years shy of the maximum.

The Fort Worth, Texas, man was charged in August 2009 with murder and felony murder after DNA evidence linked him to the unsolved homicide of 49-year-old William J. Cooke on July 15, 1980.

Watkins, now 51, pleaded guilty in June to an amended and lesser count of voluntary manslaughter — admitting that he stabbed Cooke twice in the chest because he was angry over an unwelcome sexual advance.

In 1980, voluntary manslaughter was a Class B felony and punishable by six to 20 years in prison. Now the crime is a Class A felony, which has a penalty of 20 to 50 years.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff’s Office reopened Cooke’s homicide investigation last year after being contacted by Cooke’s family. The investigation was led by Detective Lt. Steve Kohne, who is now deceased.

Family members of the Santa Clara, Calif., man did not attend Thursday’s hearing because they live out of state.

But Cooke’s niece, Nancy Carr, and one of his nephews, William Golberg, each sent letters to the court detailing now their uncle’s death affected their mother — Cooke’s sister — and the family.

They asked that Watkins receive the maximum punishment.

“He did not deserve to be left for dead. He did not deserve to die alone in a cold hotel room,” Carr wrote of her uncle. “ ... Mr. Watkins, I hope you rot in prison and then I hope you rot in hell.

“You took away my uncle’s life, and you have no right to live your life as a free person ever.”

Details of the crime

Watkins testified during his June guilty plea hearing that he was hitchhiking in July 1980 when Cooke offered him a ride. He said he was too drunk to remember where he was picked up, only that it was somewhere in Ohio.

The two men later stopped in Lafayette and checked into a room at the former Ramada Inn on Indiana 26 East.

The building, between IHOP restaurant and Walmart, is now Quality Inn and Suites.

Goldberg said it was common for his uncle to stop and help people with broken-down vehicles or to offer people rides.

“The harm he caused our family cannot be described,” Golberg wrote. “My mother had to live the rest of her life losing her only brother that meant everything to her.

“... Mr. Watkins took advantage of Uncle Bill’s kindness and took his life.”

According to court documents, hotel staff found Cooke’s body in his hotel room, lying face up on a bed. His pant pockets were pulled inside out, and change was scattered on the bed.

His wallet, vehicle and a diamond ring were stolen.

Evidence from Cooke’s hotel room, including a cigarette butt that contained Watkins’ DNA, was sent to an Indiana State Police lab in 2009.

DNA analysis was not available to law enforcement in 1980.

The DNA pattern from the cigarette matched Watkins’ DNA pattern that had been stored in the national Combined DNA Index System because of unrelated criminal convictions in Texas.

He was in prison in Texas when charges were filed last August.

Lasting effects

His attorney, Deputy Public Defender Mike Trueblood, described Watkins as “deeply remorseful” and cooperative from their first attorney-client meeting.

“He said, ‘I’m glad this is over. I want to get this over with. I’ve been carrying this with me for 30 years,’” Trueblood said.

Jeffrey S. Wendt, a forensic psychologist from Brighton, Mich., diagnosed Watkins as having an emotional disorder similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, Trueblood said.

That was triggered by his killing Cooke.

“The incident that occurred 30 years ago affected his conduct for the rest of his life,” Trueblood said.

According to Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Watkins has served a number of years in prison in Texas for five felonies — among them, aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon, burglary and theft.

They occurred between 1981 and 2007.

Though currently at the Tippecanoe County Jail, Watkins is finishing a 2008 conviction out of Texas for reckless battery on an elderly person.

Harrington said Watkins had gone AWOL — absent without leave — from the U.S. Army in 1980. He should have been in Germany in July 1980, when Cooke was killed.
Sentencing

Williams ordered that Watkins' 18-year sentence for Cooke's death begin after the Texas sentence is done in December.

"You had the opportunity to turn yourself in. You could have each time you were arrested and convicted," Williams said.

"You chose nothing."

Charges against Watkins had to be handled under 1980 Indiana criminal laws.

Under his plea agreement, Watkins cannot appeal his conviction or sentence.

Williams noted that the case would have been difficult for the prosecution and defense had it gone to trial.

The state's potential witnesses included sheriff's deputies who have long retired or have died, along with employees from the former Ramada Inn.

Kohne, the lead investigator, died in June of pancreatic cancer, five days after Watkins pleaded guilty.

In a move that rarely occurs in a courtroom during criminal cases, Trueblood, the defense attorney, began his arguments Thursday by praising the sheriff's office and Kohne.

"I think it's appropriate to recognize how these series of events came together," he said.

"Detective Kohne did a fine job. ... It's not often that I come to court and praise the police."

Sheriff Tracy Brown said the case has inspired his office to look into other unsolved, major criminal cases.

July 23 2010: WLFI TV

Man pleads guilty in Wabash River death
Faces 50 to 60 years in prison

- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Wesley Kelly pleaded guilty to murder, in the death of Steven Lee Smith, after a little confusion in court Friday afternoon.

Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel informed Kelly of his rights, saying he had a plea agreement with Kelly's signature on it.

But when Judge Daniel finally asked Kelly what he plead, Kelly said "not guilty." He then clarified that he meant to say "guilty."

Kelly's defense attorney, James Michael Trueblood, asked his client about the turn of events on December 6th, 2008.

Kelly told the court that he had been living with Smith for about two months, when they had some neighbors over for a party. Kelly became angry because Smith told one of the guests that Kelly was a sex offender.

He said he struck Smith, and Smith then hit the back of his head on a toilet.

Kelly said Smith was contemplating suicide, and Kelly encouraged his roommate to go through with it, walking with him to the railroad bridge over the Wabash River. Kelly said when Smith changed his mind, he struck him with a padlock.

In court, he described how Smith's body fell into the river, resurfaced and then went into the water again. He said he knew that Smith was afraid of water and couldn't swim.

Family members and police have searched for Smith's body over the past year and a half. And Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington and family members said the search is likely to continue, even after today's plea.

"I don't think the Lafayette Police Department's ever going to stop looking," Harrington said. "I think with the amount of public attention to this crime we still have hopes, as I'm sure the family does, that some point in time, something in the river will be found."

"It'll be someone that's out there along the river, find something that's out of place and call Lafayette Police and have them come in and take a look at it, see if it was something of Steve," said Cyndi Miller, Steven Smith's cousin. "A piece of clothing, a shoe, anything like that. Just anything that you would associate with a person, maybe if you see it call them. Cause it could be mother nature's way of giving Steve back."

Miller said the plea hearing offered closure for the family to take the next step in the grieving process.

She said the family plans to build a memorial in honor of Steven Smith. They will be starting the fund raising process for that very soon.

Kelly's sentencing is set for August 27th. He faces 50 to 60 years in prison, but for cooperating with law enforcement, the court will drop two other charges: a felony for being a habitual offender and a misdemeanor charge for battery.

The habitual offender charge would carry extra prison time of up to 30 years.

July 22 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen's plea includes homicide immunity

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager who pleaded guilty Wednesday to burglarizing area businesses may have avoided ever being charged in connection with the still-unresolved murder of an acquaintance, Kory Rogers.

Clint J. Laxton, 19, was one of three people named in court documents as a suspect in an alleged scheme to rob Rogers of cash and marijuana on April 5, three days before Rogers was shot in the chest at his south Lafayette home.

Laxton has not been criminally charged in that suspected conspiracy. But Rogers' homicide investigation led to information that implicated Laxton and another conspiracy suspect, Wesley H. Coffey, in business burglaries last August and September in Lafayette.

Laxton pleaded guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of burglary and one count of attempted burglary for break-ins at Jimmy Johns, LaTapatia and Body Graphics.

All of the counts are Class C felonies.

Laxton is scheduled to be sentenced Sept. 10 by Judge Randy Williams.

Under his plea agreement, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office will not charge Laxton with felony murder in connection to Rogers' April 8 shooting death or in the April 5 robbery plot.

Also under the plea agreement, which was filed Wednesday in Superior 1:

☐ The length of Laxton's sentence in the burglaries will be left up to Williams, although two of the counts must run concurrently -- making Laxton's possible sentence four to 16 years in prison.

Williams will decide on Sept. 10 whether to accept the plea.

☐ The state will not charge Laxton for his suspected involvement in the theft of marijuana from a drug dealer, which occurred sometime last September or October.

☐ Felony charges of possession of marijuana, filed in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 4, will be dropped.

But those conditions also mean that Laxton must truthfully testify during any hearings or trials for his co-defendants -- Coffey, 34, of Avondale, Ariz., Edward C. Zaragoza, 30, of Mooresville and Jordan A. Wilson, 21, of Lafayette.

Coffey and Zaragoza are the other two suspects in the alleged scheme to rob Rogers on April 5. The prosecutor's office has previously acknowledged that Zaragoza is a suspect in Rogers' murder.

According to court documents, the trio allegedly was after $12,500 cash and about two pounds of marijuana that detectives believe Rogers stole from a drug dealer on March 17 in Lafayette.

Coffey and Wilson are Laxton's co-defendants in the business burglaries.

The prosecutor's office can pursue criminal charges in the above-mentioned cases if Laxton does not fulfill his part of the plea agreement.

As of Wednesday, no one has been arrested or charged directly in Rogers' murder.

Laxton remains in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined $55,000 surety bond, or $50,000 surety and $500 cash.

July 22 2010: WLFI TV

Watkins receives 18 years in prison
Dion Watkins receives sentence for 1980 crime

- Aaron Leedy

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Dion Watkins walked out of Tippecanoe County Superior Court One on Thursday with an 18-year prison sentence.

On June 10 of this year, 51-year-old Watkins pleaded guilty to the stabbing of William Cooke, a crime that took place nearly 30 years ago at a Lafayette hotel.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Watkins' prison term in Indiana won't begin until his time in Texas is over.

"He's still serving his sentence from Texas and he'll fully serve that executed time December of this year, at which point-in-time he will then start serving his 18 years here in Indiana for this crime," said Harrington.

According to Harrington, Indiana law states that a person must be charged under the law that was in effect at the time of the crime.

"However the law also says that even though this crime occurred in 1981, the court should not be blinded by what he's done since then," said Harrington.

What Watkins has done since then, is something Harrington calls a series of repeated crimes. Since 1981, Watkins has been in prison in Texas five times. Public Defender Mike Trueblood declined on-camera comment but did say in court:

"The recommended sentence of 10 years in 1980 would be appropriate," said Trueblood.

"Back in the 80's, the court was also supposed to start at 10 and was supposed to stick to 10, unless the court could clearly document reasons to increase it or reduce it," said Harrington.

Cooke's family did not attend the sentencing Thursday because they live out of state. In court, Judge Randy Williams told Watkins he had a choice, while Cooke's family did not.

"You suffered for 30 years with this hanging over your head. The victim's family suffered for 30 years with no choice of theirs," said Williams.

Harrington is happy Cooke's family finally has closure.

"But I don't think there's really any way to be pleased anytime when a person has lost his life," said Harrington.

July 17 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in apartment stabbing

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An afternoon of alcohol consumption preceded a stabbing Monday at a Lafayette apartment, court documents allege.

Richard M. Burke, 50, was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with aggravated battery, battery by means of a deadly weapon and battery resulting in bodily injury. All three counts are felonies.

He was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $50,000 surety bond.

The victim, Michael Lee Moore, 36, of Lafayette, had been in the intensive care unit at St. Elizabeth East hospital through at least Wednesday. He has since been released, a hospital spokesman said Friday.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Moore told investigators that the two men were drinking in Moore's apartment at 1301 Columbia St. when Burke lunged at him for no reason.

Moore denied stabbing Burke first, which conflicts with Burke's story. A Lafayette police officer overheard Burke tell a nurse that he was stabbed first by Moore and grabbed a kitchen knife in retaliation.

Burke had a minor stab wound on his chest that medical personnel told police did not appear to be self-inflicted.

Officers found a filet knife with an eight-inch blade -- the first four inches covered in blood -- at Moore's apartment. Moore told investigators that he believed the knife went into his chest about four inches.

Burke admitted cutting his own wrists and throat afterward because "he wanted to die with Moore." He was

treated Monday at Clarian Arnett Hospital for those injuries.

July 15, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspected rolling meth lab leads to charges

A traffic stop one week ago has led to methamphetamine-related charges against two Lafayette men.

Len O. Myers, 19, and William A. Parks, 27, were each charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with information of illegal drug lab, a Class C felony, and possession of chemical reagents, a Class D felony.

Both were being held on a $10,000 surety bond in Tippecanoe County Jail.

Myers was the driver of a Dodge Intrepid that was stopped overnight July 8 on North 11th Street because its headlights were not on.

Parks was in the back seat.

The officer who stopped the vehicle then smelled what he believed to be anhydrous ammonia, an ingredient commonly used to make meth.

That led to a search of the vehicle. Packages of pseudoephedrine, lighter fluid, pots and a plastic gas container were found on the backseat floorboard.

July 15, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Convicted in meth case, man to get 20-plus years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette man faces a minimum of 20 years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 of cooking methamphetamine in a garage on the city's north end.

The verdicts were returned against Corey N. Fletcher following a two-day trial. One was for conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine, a Class A felony because it was within 1,000 feet of a school and family housing complex. The other was for information of illegal drug lab, a Class C felony.

Jurors found Fletcher, 32, not guilty of an additional count of possession of methamphetamine, a Class B felony.

Attorneys will meet again Tuesday before Judge Randy Williams, who will decide whether Fletcher is considered a habitual substance offender. That is punishable by three to eight more years in prison.

The charges against Fletcher stemmed from an investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit. Officers came upon an active meth lab in a garage at 2117 Meharry St. on Oct. 21, 2009.

According to court documents, Fletcher's co-defendants, Wesley A. Hampton, 33, and Walter R. Kujawa Jr., 31, both of Lafayette, were inside the garage. Fletcher was not there, but he was named as a participant by Kujawa.

Fletcher took the stand briefly Wednesday morning, testifying that he was not involved.

And his attorney, Tim Broden, pointed out that it was odd for someone to leave before the men finished.

"If meth is so addictive, would a person leave to go home and watch TV?" Broden said when questioning LPD Detective Dan Shumaker, who was a witness for the state.

Shumaker, who was on the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force for 10 years, teaches classes on drug identification and testified about the dangers associated with cooking and using the man-made substance.

"I think most addicts would stay to finish what they had," Shumaker replied.

What officers found that morning was meth in its final stages of being made, the detective testified.

Evidence presented by Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Osmon refuted Fletcher's claims that he was not a participant. Among the items recovered by officers was a receipt from Pay Less Super Market from the morning of Oct. 21.

The receipt included a birthdate identical to Fletcher's. It was on the receipt because the person had bought cigarettes.

Jurors on Tuesday also watched video surveillance from Pay Less, which showed a white male similar in appearance to Fletcher buying cigarettes, RC Cola and a large container of salt.

Salt can be combined with other ingredients to finish cooking meth.

A Class A felony is punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison. Fletcher faces at least 20 years incarceration because he has prior, unrelated felony convictions.

Kujawa and Hampton are slated to stand trial in Superior Court 1 on similar charges later this year.

July 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Sex act with teen costs Lafayette man 35 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man was sentenced today to 35 years in prison on accusations that he performed sexual acts on a 13-year-old girl who was attending a sleepover at his home.

Bane J. Elliott, 43, was found guilty in June of four counts of child molestation - two Class A felonies and two Class C felonies - after a three-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Elliott did not testify during today's hourlong sentencing hearing. But his attorney, Kent Moore, told Judge Don Daniel that Elliott maintains his innocence and plans to hire an attorney to appeal the convictions.

His father and adult son and daughter spoke on Elliott's behalf.

"The Bane Elliott we've known for 43 years is 180 degrees different than what people are depicting him to be," said his father, Ron Elliott. "Bane has always been a loving and caring husband, father, son and grandfather."

Charges against Elliott stemmed from an investigation by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office on accusations the 13-year-old said occurred the weekend of Oct. 25, 2008.

She was one of several 12- and 13-year-old girls spending the night at Elliott's south Lafayette home.

The girl, who testified for two hours during the June trial, said she, Elliott and two friends were lying on a bed when Elliott began kissing her. That reportedly led to more sexual acts.

She said this occurred after the other girls fell asleep.

Elliott denied touching the girl and testified that he only sat on the bed with them.

Traces of male DNA were found on the girl's neck, right breast, genitals and undergarments.

She gave a tearful victim impact statement during today's hearing and said she hopes to share her story with younger children to encourage them to come forward if they've been molested.

"Bad things came out of this," said the 13-year-old, explaining that she struggled with nightmares and rumors by classmates. "But good things came out of this, to-o.

"... The best thing is, no one will have to live through my pain."

Shortly before today's hearing, Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman filed two letters from two girls who said they, too, were allegedly molested by Bane Elliott.

Moore, the defense attorney, asked that the hearing be continued because of those letters. His request was denied.

Elliott's 35-year prison sentence will be followed by five years on probation, with two of those years on Global Positioning System, or GPS, monitoring. He also was ordered to pay $1,325 to the sheriff's office for transportation costs from Florida - where Elliott was living at the time of his arrest - back to Tippecanoe County.

He was given a combined 100 days credit for time already served in custody and for good behavior.

One aggravator considered by the judge was Elliott's criminal history, which included two misdemeanor convictions for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Zeman said he provided alcohol to teenage girls.

July 10, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged with cooking meth in city

A Lafayette man is suspected of setting up a methamphetamine lab in a garage on the city's north end that was rented by a female acquaintance.

Floyd W. "Billy" Treece, 30, was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with dealing in methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine and possession of chemical reagents or precursors.

The prosecutor's office asked for a relatively high bond amount because Treece might qualify as a habitual substance offender.

He was being held at the county jail Friday night on a $70,000 surety bond, jail workers said.

Treece was arrested July 2 after the owner of a detached garage in the 2200 Stillwell Street smelled ammonia and called Lafayette police. The garage was used by one of the man's rental tenants.

Anhydrous ammonia is a chemical often used in clandestine meth production.

The tenant was not charged or arrested. She told officers she had been letting Treece, whom she knew had cooked meth years ago, stay at her home off and on.

Among the items found in the garage were small plastic bottles with tubes attached to them and a large jug partially covered by a bag. A coffee grinder and cold medication were found in a bedroom where Treece was staying.

July 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Otterbein man faces felony stalking charges

An Otterbein man who is accused of repeatedly harassing and stalking an ex-girlfriend for several months faces felony charges of stalking.-

Among the allegations: that he mailed a personal video to her now-husband, waited outside her daughter's school and went through her trash.

Stephen C. Schaler, 63, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of felony stalking and misdemeanor counts of invasion of privacy and harassment.

He was released Monday from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $25,000 surety bond.

The charges stem from incidents that Schaler's ex-girlfriend said began in February 2009, after the two broke up and she began dating someone new. She now is married to that person.

She first contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office in April 2009, according to court documents.

According to a probable cause affidavit, the woman documented at least 54 times between May 2009 and February 2010 where Schaler reportedly followed, harassed or had unwanted contacted with her.

Those included an incident in which a neighbor allegedly saw Schaler take two of his ex-girlfriend's trash bags. The documents allege that sugar was poured into the gas tank of her husband's vehicle, and nails and screws were left under vehicles' tires.

The woman received a protective order through Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 in August, which prohibited Schaler from contacting her and her family. He was ordered to stay 500 feet from her home, children's school and her husband's business, among other places.

Schaler was arrested on Valentine's Day, after the ex-girlfriend spotted him driving behind her family's vehicle and called 911. He was arrested this past Monday on the felony stalking and misdemeanor charges this past Monday, posting bond the same day.

A home telephone number in Otterbein could not be found to reach Schaler.

July 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-youth minister charged with child seduction

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A foster parent and youth minister from West Lafayette is accused of having repeated sexual contact with a 17-year-old girl in his care

William "Lee" Porter, 53, was charged today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with criminal deviate conduct, a Class B felony, and five counts of child seduction, a Class D felony.

Porter was arrested last November, shortly after the investigation began, said Detective Sgt. Cindy Marion of the West Lafayette Police Department. He was arrested shortly before 7 p.m. today on a warrant issued with the criminal charges.

Once booked into the Tippecanoe County Jail, his bond will be set at $25,000 surety.

The charges stem from allegations that the 17-year-old said occurred sometime after April 2007, the month the girl - a foster child - was placed at Porter's West Lafayette home.

According to a probable cause affidavit, the girl alleges that the sexual contact began with fondling. She allowed the alleged touching to continue because Porter reportedly threatened to otherwise cheat on his wife.

The girl first reported the allegations in November, when she stopped a West Lafayette police officer who was working as a school resource officer.

She said forced sexual contact that led to the criminal deviate conduct charge occurred in November 2009, when Porter's wife was out of town. The girl had moved back with her biological father in November 2008, but visited Porter a year later, apparently to do laundry and watch cable television - which she could not do at home.

Porter formerly was youth minister at Elmwood Church of Christ in Lafayette. Marion said he resigned from that position. A message was left Thursday afternoon for Gilbert Kerrigan, Elmwood Church of Christ's senior minister.

Marion said Porter was the 17-year-old's youth minister, in addition to her foster parent.

In Indiana, the age of sexual consent is 16. However, a person can be charged with child seduction if the victim is between the ages of 16 and 18 and the suspect is a guardian or caretaker.

July 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Robbery, beating results in 8-year term

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Wednesday to eight years in prison for assaulting a random stranger outside a north-end bar and taking the man's cell phone and cash.

Steven J. Burns II, 19, pleaded guilty this past May in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to robbery resulting in bodily injury, a Class B felony -- admitting that he attacked Armando Nolasco-Hernandez on Sept. 26, 2008, near 26th and Roosevelt streets.

Burns, one of three people involved in the beating, was 17 years old at the time. Criminal charges were filed in August 2009, about one month after Burns turned 18 and the case was moved out of juvenile court.

Nolasco-Hernandez had just left Cox's Pub. A taxi driver passing through the area found him bleeding and battered. Nolasco-Hernandez had a broken nose, among other injuries.

According to court documents, two of the suspects walked in front of Nolasco-Hernandez, and the third attacked him from behind.

Burns was identified as a suspect after a Lafayette police officer found him riding a bicycle nearby. Another officer who was with Nolasco-Herandez at St. Elizabeth Central hospital called the man's cell phone, which rang and was found in Burns' pocket.

Burns' prison sentence will be followed by two years on supervised probation.

The other two suspects were identified as Burns' cousin and a female friend, both of whom said Burns inflicted the injuries, Detective Brian Baker of the Lafayette Police Department said Wednesday. Neither was charged.

July 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Driver who led police on chase charged

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Multiple felony and misdemeanor charges were filed Wednesday against a West Lafayette man accused of leading police on a high-speed, 40-minute chase -- striking one officer's hand in the process.

Chad M. Anthrop, 19, has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest last Friday. He was being held Wednesday on a $5,000 surety bond, down from $10,000 surety.

Anthrop is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 with resisting law enforcement and criminal recklessness by means of a deadly weapon, resulting in serious bodily injury. Each count is a Class C felony.

Misdemeanor counts against Anthrop include criminal mischief, operating a vehicle while intoxicated and minor consumption.

The police pursuit that led to criminal charges began shortly before 5 a.m. Friday, when police were called to break up a fight at U.S. 52 Mobile Home Park, just outside West Lafayette.

That fight reportedly involved baseball bats and firearms.

Both the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office and West Lafayette Police Department responded.

According to a probable cause affidavit, sheriff's Deputy Matthew Couch and West Lafayette Officer Marcus Slifer were walking through the mobile home park when headlights from a pickup truck turned on.

The driver, alleged to be Anthrop, refused to stop, despite Couch and Slifer yelling out the command.

Slifer's hand was struck by the truck's left headlight as the truck sped past. He was not injured.

Officers followed Anthrop's vehicle on several county roads and even through a soybean field. The chase reached speeds between 80 and 115 mph.

Anthrop was arrested near his home on Mason Dixon Drive, where a West Lafayette police sergeant had been waiting.

His passenger, Robert C. Grant, 19, of West Lafayette, also was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 with misdemeanor trespass.

July 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Couple face charges in domestic dispute

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette couple for an argument last Friday that ended with one of them being stabbed

Latoyia D. Fillmore, 23, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; and criminal recklessness by means of a deadly weapon, a Class D felony.

She was being held Wednesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $10,000 surety bond.

Her boyfriend, Chris D. Burton, 19, is charged in Superior Court 2 with misdemeanor battery. He was being held in jail Wednesday on a $250 cash bond.

Burton was treated at St. Elizabeth East hospital for a one-centimeter cut to his back left shoulder and a small scratch on his left hand. Fillmore, who complained of jaw pain, was treated at St. Elizabeth Central hospital.

The charges stemmed from a fight between Fillmore and Burton on Friday afternoon at 571 Gordon Court, in the Claystone at the Crossing apartment complex off Indiana 25 West.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Fillmore reportedly became angry when a woman called her cell phone, asking for Burton. Fillmore told Lafayette police officers that she got a 3-inch folding, pocket knife from an upstairs bedroom after Burton struck her.

Burton told officers he was trying to leave when he was stabbed in the back.

Both appeared before a Tippecanoe County magistrate Wednesday afternoon for their initial hearings.

June 30, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges link homicide victim, drug deal

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Nearly three months after a homicide shocked a quiet neighborhood on Lafayette's south side, no one has been arrested or charged in connection with the case.

But charges continue to mount against acquaintances of the homicide victim, Kory D. Rogers, 21, who was found dead April 8, shot to death in a home he shared with his sister.

The most recent revelation came in court documents filed Monday with charges against Wesley H. Coffey, 34, of Avondale, Ariz.

The documents alleged that Rogers, 21, paid Coffey $5,000 to $6,000 for two pounds of marijuana. Coffey, formerly of Lafayette, is one of three people suspected of conspiring to rob Rogers on April 5, three days before the murder.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office on Monday charged Coffey in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of dealing in marijuana, possession of marijuana and theft.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the roughly two pounds of marijuana Coffey sold to Rogers allegedly had been stolen in September or October 2009 from the vehicle of a suspected drug dealer in Lafayette.

Coffey was arrested about two weeks ago in Mexicali, Mexico, on an earlier issued warrant related to a 2007 burglary in Tippecanoe County, Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department said Tuesday.

Court records show that Coffey did not show up for scheduled guilty plea and sentencing hearings on April 23 in Superior Court 1 in that burglary case.

He currently is in custody and being transported to Lafayette from Calexico, Calif.

Once in the Tippecanoe County Jail, Coffey's bond will be set at $25,000 surety. Court records do not indicate that Coffey has obtained an attorney to represent him on the newest charges.

Detectives believe that Coffey and his friends, Edward C. Zaragoza, 30, of Mooresville, and Clint J. Laxton, 19, of Lafayette, schemed to rob Rogers of cash and marijuana sometime before April 8.

As of Tuesday, only Zaragoza had been charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, a Class B felony.

During a hearing Friday on Zaragoza's request to reduce his $100,000 surety bond, the prosecutor's office

acknowledged that Zaragoza is under investigation for Rogers' murder. The judge raised his bond to $250,000.

According to court documents filed with the conspiracy charge, Rogers had burglarized the residence or property of a drug dealer in Lafayette on March 17 -- making off with $12,500 cash and about two pounds of marijuana.

Investigators suspect that Laxton and Zaragoza planned to both go to Rogers' home at 2200 Ottawa Drive, with Laxton pretending to be a hostage and Zaragoza holding a gun to Laxton's head.

Laxton and Coffey are charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 in connection to business burglaries at Jimmy Johns and La Tapatia in August and September 2009 in Lafayette. Information linking them to those burglaries grew out of the murder investigation, court documents showed.

Laxton was being held Tuesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $50,000 surety bond and a $10,000 cash bond in an unrelated case.

Information linking Coffey to Monday's charges came largely from Jordan A. Wilson, 21, a Lafayette man also charged in the business burglaries.

According to an affidavit with Coffey's marijuana and theft allegations, Wilson told investigators that he, Laxton, Coffey and Coffey's wife moved to Arizona in October 2009 using money from the sale of marijuana to Rogers.

Wilson was being held Tuesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $50,000 surety bond. His name has not been mentioned in connection to Rogers, other than the stolen marijuana.

Other than what was discussed during Friday's hearing, Lafayette investigators have declined to name suspects in Rogers' homicide.

Bond amounts for all four men are significantly higher than standard amounts set by Tippecanoe County's bond schedule.

June 30, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Illinois teen charged with stealing hospital donations

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Naperville, Ill., teenager has been charged in connection with the theft of a donation can for Indianapolis' Riley Hospital for Children from a Lafayette gas station in January.

An arrest warrant for the suspect, Jacquez I. Lewis, 19, was issued Friday after Lewis failed to show up for an initial hearing in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Lewis is charged with one count of theft, a Class D felony.

He most likely is in the Chicago area, Detective Joe Clyde of the Lafayette Police Department said Tuesday.

Lewis is believed to be one of two men captured on surveillance video at Speedway on Old U.S. 231 South on Jan. 9 -- one of them holding what appears to be a donation can for Riley.

Clyde previously said it appeared one of the suspects distracted the clerk while the second man swiped the can, which was located near the register.

He released photos from the surveillance video in January.

The can contained an undisclosed amount of money. The suspects also stole three doughnuts.

Clyde said Tuesday that investigators have identified the second suspect, who was seen holding the can in surveillance video. He has not been formally charged.

Attempts to locate either of them for interviews have not been successful, said Clyde, who spoke with Lewis' sister at the Claystone at the Crossing apartment complex shortly after the theft.

According to court documents filed with Lewis' theft charge, the Speedway clerk saw the two men get into a white Ford station wagon. Officers tracked the station wagon to a rental business.

The station wagon was later found parked at Claystone apartments. Evidence from the crime scene was found in the back seat, police said

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June 27, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2 warrants issued for Purdue student in ID theft case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Purdue University student is suspected of participating in an elaborate scheme to obtain fraudulent credit cards and financial loans from financial records of tenants that were stolen from a West Lafayette apartment complex.

Adekanmi "Kami" Adewola Arojojoye, 21, West Lafayette, is charged in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with seven counts of fraud on a financial institution; four counts of identity theft; one count of conspiracy to commit fraud on a financial institution; and one count of conspiracy to commit theft.

All counts are felonies.

Investigators this week still were trying to locate Arojojoye, said Detective Lt. Dan McGrew of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. Two warrants have been issued for his arrest.

Arojojoye is listed as a junior in the School of Liberal Arts at Purdue, according to Brian Zink, a spokesman with the university's news service.

Criminal charges against the student largely stem from information provided to police by a co-defendant, Dejuan P. Garner, 25, of Homewood, Ill.

Garner had pleaded guilty in November 2009 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to theft, admitting that he broke into Campus Suite Apartments in November 2008 and stole financial files.

As part of his plea agreement, Garner was required to provide a "cleanup statement" detailing the crime. He was sentenced this past February to three years in prison.

Campus Suite Apartments are located off U.S. 52 West and are occupied primarily by Purdue students.

Garner told a Tippecanoe County sheriff's detective and investigator with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office that he asked Arojojoye to help him somehow get money using stolen identities from the financial files.

Arojojoye allegedly told Garner that his family previously created bogus businesses to get credit card terminals -- in turn, using stolen credit cards on those terminals and sending money back to Nigeria.

The two friends are accused of applying for numerous credit cards and loans in the victims' names through made-up businesses and e-mail addresses. Investigators used those e-mails to track Internet protocol addresses, many of which were linked to Garner or Arojojoye.

Anyone with information on Arojojoye's whereabouts is asked to call the sheriff's office at (765) 423-9321 or the anonymous WeTip hot line at (800) 782-7463.

June 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect linked to Southside Lafayette murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Mooresville man is under investigation for murder in the April 8 shooting death of a Lafayette man at his south-end home, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office has acknowledged.

The connection was brought up during a motion to reduce bond hearing today in Tippecanoe Circuit Court for Edward C. Zaragoza, 30. He's currently charged with conspiring to rob the homicide victim, Kory D. Rogers, 21, three days before the shooting.

It was the first time that a suspect in Rogers' death has been publicly named by the Lafayette Police Department or the prosecutor's office. As of today, however, no one has been arrested or formally charged.

"The defendant is aware that he is under investigation for murder," Deputy Prosecutor Greg Loyd told Judge Don Daniel. "All of these facts combined present a significant risk to the community."

Daniel agreed. Zaragoza is now being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined $250,000 surety bond, up from $100,000 surety.

June 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Neglect charges filed against mother of wandering toddler

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafa-yette woman whose toddler-age son was found alone and barefoot at an auto supply store last week.

Astrid C. Johnson, 29, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with one count of neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony. She was being held Thursday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $5,000 surety bond.

The boy, who turns 3 on Monday, was removed from his home by the Indiana Department of Child Services.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the criminal charge, the boy walked into Auto Body Supply Co. at 2012 Kossuth St. the morning of June 18.

He was barefoot, had a soiled diaper and was sucking on his fingers, which were covered with gold spray paint.

The boy was not able to tell a store employee his name, his mother's name or where he lived. Store employees then called the Lafayette Police Department.

Officers learned the boy was Johnson's son after asking people in the surrounding neighborhood. Johnson lives in the 1900 block of Kossuth Street.

Johnson reportedly told officers that she put the boy to sleep at 1 a.m. on June 18 and had not seen him since. Though they sleep in the same room, she did not hear the boy get up and leave.

Johnson, who is not employed, told officers she has no family or friends to help care for the boy or an 8-year-old

daughter.

Lafayette police responded to a similar call involving Johnson and her son in 2008. That time, the boy was left alone and found by an apartment maintenance worker.

Johnson requested -- and was granted -- a public defender during her initial court hearing on Wednesday.

June 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen faces adult charges for dealing prescription drugs

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager will be tried as an adult on accusations that he tried to sell prescription painkillers at Jefferson High School.

Jecori M. Jeffries, 17, was charged this week in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with attempted dealing in a controlled substance, a Class A felony; dealing in a controlled substance, a Class B felony; and possession of a controlled substance, a Class C felony.

Jeffries was arrested at Jeff on Feb. 22.

The teenager was waived in May from Tippecanoe County's juvenile court. In the order, Tippecanoe Superior Court 3 Judge Loretta Rush cited the teen's prior criminal history.

Jeffries was adjudicated in 2006 and placed on probation for conspiracy to deal marijuana and dealing in marijuana. Those offenses would have been felonies had Jeffries been tried then as an adult.

An adjudication in juvenile court is similar to a criminal conviction.

Rush also noted the teen's history of house arrest violations, poor attendance at prior service programs, disregard for school staff and disrespect for authority.

Attempted dealing of a controlled substance is typically a Class B felony, which has a penalty range of six to 20 years in prison. It is elevated to a Class A felony -- punishable by 20 to 50 years incarceration -- if the offense occurs on or within 1,000 of school property.

June 24, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Leaving fatal scene costs man 5 years

A West Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to five years in prison for fleeing from a one-vehicle crash he caused last October that killed his passenger.

Mario E. Lopez, 38, likely will be deported from the United States to his native Honduras afterward. Lopez told Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams that he had not realized how badly his co-worker and friend, Everado Delreal, 41, was injured.

"To the family ... I'm sorry. We were friends," Lopez said through a Spanish-language interpreter. "I was just accompanying him. It wasn't the first time I helped him drive.

"Not on anyone would I wish they died, especially my friend."

The Oct. 27, 2009, wreck occurred in the 8300 block of Indiana 43 North near Battle Ground. According to

information discussed during Wednesday's hearing, Lopez fell asleep while driving Delreal's pickup truck.

The truck went into a ditch and struck machinery used to place utility lines. Delreal, of Boswell, was pinned in the front passenger seat. He died from his injuries at St. Elizabeth Central hospital.

Lopez pleaded guilty in April in Superior Court 1 to leaving the scene of an accident that resulted in injury or death, a Class C felony.

According to court documents, Lopez did not have a driver's license. The two men had gone to a car auction in Illinois the previous day. While driving back to Lafayette overnight, Delreal got sleepy and they switched places -- with Lopez taking the wheel.

Witnesses reported seeing a man outside the crashed pickup. The man was then seen running into nearby cornfields. Lopez, who suffered facial injuries, was found at Home Hospital about four hours later.

"His concern was saving his own skin," said Deputy Prosecutor John Schafer, who argued for a six-year prison sentence. Delreal "was asleep and woke up pinned behind the dashboard. The last image he saw was being comforted by a stranger."

Lopez told the court that he had waited in the cornfields for about five minutes -- long enough to see that ambulances had arrived.

Delreal's niece, Maria Delreal, said her uncle's death devastated their tight-knit family. He had two sons, the youngest 1 year old.

"I like to think everything happens for a reason," Maria Delreal testified, "but I can't think of a reason why he would have run. He couldn't call 911. It's just three numbers."

June 23, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen faces felonies in WL break-ins

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette teenager is suspected of breaking into two unlocked homes and an unlocked vehicle in the city's University Farms subdivision and taking credit cards and other valuables.Kenneth D. Brock-Thomas, 19, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with five counts of forgery; four counts of fraud; one count of identity deception; and two counts of theft/receiving stolen property.

All counts are felonies.

Brock-Thomas was released last week from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $25,000 surety -- $2,500 cash -- bond.

Charges against him stem from residential thefts last October and November, all in University Farms, said Sgt. Cindy Marion, a detective with the West Lafayette Police Department.

One break-in occurred overnight, while the homeowner was inside. Marion said a garage door was not locked.

Another occurred while the homeowner left for a walk, and her front door was not locked.

Items stolen included wallets, a cell phone and a laptop computer.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, credit cards belonging to all three victims -- one

of them, a Purdue University Corporate Card -- were then used at businesses at Tippecanoe Mall.

Investigators were able to identify Brock-Thomas as a suspect based on mall employees who recognized him as a frequent mall customer.

Brock-Thomas also has his name tattooed on his upper arm, which a store manager remembered.

A home telephone number for the teenager could not be located Tuesday.

June 23, 2010: WLFI TV

Man goes to prison for leaving accident
Passenager died after truck crash

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A man is sentenced after leaving the scene of an car accident where his passenger died.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Mario Lopez, 38, of Honduras will serve five years in prison. Lopez was charged with leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death and property damage, and driving without a license. Lopez crasheda truck into construction equipment in October 2009 on State Road 43 near the I-65 overpass after returning from an auto auction in Illinois. Everardo Del Real, 41, of Boswell was pinned in the wreckage and later died.

Harrington said Lopez fled into a near by cornfield because he didn't have a license and didn't want to get in trouble with the law. Lopez later was arrested when he went to an emergency room to have a cut on his face treated.

June 19, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Mom gets probation for drug-related neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman whose infant son tested positive last year for cocaine has been spared incarceration for exposing him to drugs that were dealt by the baby's father.

British D. Jones, 26, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony, and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

She was sentenced Friday to three years on supervised probation and one year on unsupervised probation.

Both her attorney, deputy public defender Andy Searle, and deputy prosecutor John Schafer recommended a suspended sentence -- meaning no prison or community corrections.

Jones was accompanied in court Friday by about 20 supporters, among them family, members of her church and her family case manager at the Tippecanoe County branch of the Indiana Department of Child Services.

"Since the case began, British has done wonderful," the DCS case manager, Ambyr Wade, testified.

Jones' mother has custody of the affected infant, now 13 months old, and an older boy. Jones told Judge Randy Williams that she sees her children every day.

The charges stemmed from an investigation in June 2009 by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit. An undercover officer purchased crack cocaine from Jones' live-in boyfriend, Justin A. Groce.

Officers got a search warrant for the couple's home on Amelia Avenue off South Creasy Lane.

They recovered 28 grams of cocaine -- with an estimated street value of $3,000, according to Prosecutor Pat Harrington -- and $6,000 cash.

A plate and knife with white residue were found in the master bedroom, which Jones and Groce shared.

Their baby's crib was 10 feet away.

Jones testified Friday that she learned Groce was dealing cocaine only a few days before the arrest on June 16, 2009. She apologized to the court for not reporting Groce to authorities.

"I loved him. I trusted him," Jones said of Groce. "I never thought my boy would be affected."

Under questions asked by Shafer, the deputy prosecutor, Jones said the 13-month-old faces "probable dependence" to cocaine from his exposure. She said the boy appears to be developing well right now.

Since her arrest, Jones has gotten a full-time job and has become an active member at her church. The judge commended Jones -- but not without lecturing her on the dangerous situation her children were in from Groce's dealing.

"What would've happened if a drug deal had gone wrong ... and someone shows up at your apartment with your children there?" Williams said.

Jones again apologized for not calling police.

Groce, 28, pleaded guilty in April to dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class B felony; and neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

He was sentenced on June 11 to 18 years in prison.

June 18, 2010: WLFI TV

20 years for cocaine dealing
Crack cocaine leads to prison

Jeff Smith

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former resident of Cook County, Illinois, has been sentenced to prison for selling crack cocaine to undercover police officers.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said 27-year-old Jamall Odum pleaded guilty to a felony count of dealing cocaine. Harrington said the sale took place within 1000 feet of the McAllister Recreation Center in Lafayette.

Odum was sentenced in Tippecanoe Superior Court Two Friday to 20 years in the Indiana Department of

Corrections. Harrington said police obtained a search warrant for Odum's residence following the sale in July, 2009. Police found 35 grams of crack cocaine which Harrington said had a street value of $3,500 to $4,500. They also found a loaded .38 caliber revolver.

Harrington said Odum is originally from Cook County, Illinois, but had been living in Lafayette for about a year before his arrest.

June 18, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Crack dealer gets 20-year sentence

A Lafayette man was sentenced this morning to 20 years in prison for selling crack cocaine to undercover police officers.

Jamall T. Odum, 27, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to dealing cocaine, a Class A felony.

He was arrested in July 2009 following an investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit. The drug sale took place near the McAllister Center on the city's north end.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said officers recovered a loaded .38-caliber revolver and 35 grams of crack cocaine after serving a warrant at Odum's home.

The crack cocaine had a street value of about $4,000, Harrington said.

June 18, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man found guilty of molesting teen

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette businessman faces 20 to 116 years in prison after being found guilty of molesting a 13-year-old girl who was attending a sleepover at his home.

The verdicts -- two counts of child molesting as a Class A felony and two counts of child molesting as a Class C felony -- were returned against Bane Elliott, 43, late Thursday afternoon in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Elliott was found not guilty of an additional count of child molesting as a Class C felony. That was based on allegations that he pulled the girl's hand onto his genitals.

Charges of child molestation vary in severity, from fondling to penetration.

Elliott was accused of performing sexual acts on the 13-year-old the weekend of Oct. 25, 2008.

The girl, who testified for two hours on Tuesday, said she, Elliott and two friends were lying on a bed when Elliott began kissing her.

She said this began after the other girls fell asleep.

Elliott denied touching the girl. He took the stand Thursday morning, claiming that he only sat on the bed with them.

"It was Halloween weekend ... the motion light was going on and off," his attorney, Kent Moore, argued. "He was trying to calm them."

He questioned why -- if the allegations were true -- the 13-year-old did not try to wake her friends. All four were on a circle-shaped bed in an upstairs bedroom.

"Does it really fit together? Is it logical?" Moore said when beginning his closing argument.

The case was presented for the state by Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman. It relied heavily on testimony from the 13-year-old and her friends, along with comparisons of DNA from Elliott and the girl's sexual assault kit.

Traces of male DNA were found on the girl's neck, right breast, genitals and undergarments. An Indiana State Police forensic biologist could not rule out Elliott as the source of some of that DNA.

The girl is friends with Elliott's daughter. She said Oct. 25 was the first time she had met Elliott.

Elliott's ex-wife also had testified that he also went to Florida, where they owned a carpet-cleaning business, and purposely avoided Tippecanoe County after the investigation began.

He refuted that accusation.

Elliott, the former owner of Heartland Carpet Care in Lafayette, will be sentenced July 12 by Judge Don Daniel.

A Class A felony is punishable by 20 to 50 years incarceration. A Class C felony is two to eight years.

June 16, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed after suspected meth lab found

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Michael B. Herget, 47, was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with dealing in methamphetamine, a Class B felony, and operating an illegal drug lab, a Class D felony.

He was being held this afternoon in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the Lafayette Police Department was called to a domestic dispute at 616 S. 29th St. on March 23. A woman found hiding near a shed on the property told officers that a meth lab was in the basement.

Officers, however, found no meth lab in the house at the time.

Remnants of a suspected methamphetamine lab found last week outside 616 S. 29th St. in Lafayette have led to criminal charges against one of the home's residents.

Then on June 8, an officer with LPD's Street Crimes Unit and an officer with the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force searched trash outside the home.

Items recovered included empty boxes and blister packs for cold medicine containing pseudoephedrine; a bag full of matches with the striker plates removed; empty bottles of lighter fluid, drain cleaner and nail polish remover; syringes; and burnt pieces of aluminum foil.

Striker plates from matches contain red phosphorous, which is one way to cook meth.

The home's owner, Thomas J. Cooper, 50, also was arrested last week in connection to the suspected meth lab. He was released this past weekend from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $25,000 surety bond, jail staff said.

June 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Cocaine conviction brings 18 years

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 18 years in prison for selling cocaine to undercover police officers and exposing an 11-month-old to the drug.

Justinn A. Groce, 28, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class B felony; and neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

Groce's prison sentence will be followed by four years on community corrections and three years on supervised probation.

The charges stemmed from an investigation in June 2009 by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit.

Officers who searched Groce's Amelia Avenue apartment found 28 grams of cocaine -- which had an estimated street value of $3,000 -- and $6,000 in cash, said Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

A baby in the apartment tested positive for cocaine. The child's mother, British D. Jones, 26, pleaded guilty in April to similar charges. She will be sentenced June 18.

June 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-student admits setting Elliott Hall fire

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Purdue University student has admitted to starting two small fires last fall at Elliott Hall of Music, apparently to bring attention to how the 69-year-old building was not equipped with smoke detectors.

The student, Isaiah T. Peedin, 23, of Martinsville pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to arson, a Class D felony, and false informing, a Class A misdemeanor -- conceding that he set papers on a bulletin board and in a band locker room on fire.

Peedin, a former member of Purdue's Student Security Patrol, further admitted that he lied to investigators when he implicated a college-age male as the arson suspect.

A sentencing hearing has been scheduled for July 23. Judge Don Daniel will decide then whether to accept Peedin's plea.

According to court documents, Peedin -- as a member of the student security patrol -- was assigned to building surveillance the night of Oct. 19 at Elliott Hall, during which time about 900 students had been taking an exam.

The building had to be evacuated.

Peedin had been heralded by university officials for discovering the fires.

Under questions posed Friday by his attorney, Bruce Graham, Peedin admitted learning shortly before Oct. 19 that Elliott Hall did not have smoke detectors. He was assigned to Elliott specifically for "fire patrol."

Peedin first set fire to papers on a bulletin board in a hallway. Those flames extinguished quickly on their own, though they caused minor charring.

He then admitted to setting old sheet paper in a band locker room on fire. One of those sheets, however, fell

behind a cabinet. Peedin said he could not reach the paper and panicked.

He ran around looking for a fire extinguisher.

"The fire got bigger than you anticipated?" Graham said. "You intended to set those fires. They were not a mistake?"

"Yeah, I did," Peedin replied. "Yes, I did."

Deputy Prosecutor Greg Loyd asked Peedin whether the description he initially gave investigators of the arson suspect matched a member of Purdue bands. Peedin said that wasn't correct.

Purdue installed battery-powered smoke detectors in Elliott Hall about a week after the fires. The building is home to Purdue University Bands, Purdue Musical Organizations and WBAA, the university's public radio station.

Elliott also is one of Purdue's main performance venues.

The university's student security patrol is part of the Purdue University Police Department. It's used for nighttime safety escorts for students, to report suspicious or criminal activity and other duties.

Peedin, a sophomore at the time, was let go after his arrest.

At the end of Friday's hearing, Daniel asked whether Peedin or the prosecutor wanted another judge for sentencing because Daniel was in Purdue University Bands as an undergrad and serves as an adviser for the band's fraternity.

Neither party objected.

The arson charge, as a Class D felony, is punishable by six months to three years incarceration.

June 10, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Texas man pleads guilty in 1980 stabbing death in Lafayette hotel

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Fort Worth, Texas, man claims he fatally stabbed another man 30 years ago at a Lafayette hotel because he was angry over an unwelcome sexual advance.

Dion Watkins, 51, pleaded guilty this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court to an amended count voluntary manslaughter in the July 15, 1980, death of William J. Cooke, 49, at the former Ramada Inn on Indiana 26 East.

In 1980, voluntary manslaughter was a Class B felony. That means Watkins faces six to 20 years in prison when he's sentenced on July 22 by Judge Randy Williams. Today, voluntary manslaughter is a Class A felony, which carries a penalty range of 20 to 50 years in prison.

Last year, Watkins was charged with murder and felony murder after the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office reopened Cooke's unsolved death and sent evidence to an Indiana State Police lab.

DNA from a cigarette in Cooke's hotel room was linked to Watkins, a Texas prison inmate.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the felony murder count against Watkins was dropped. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he has spoken to members of Cooke's family about the plea agreement.

"This was a cold case. Any time there's a cold case you obviously will have certain evidentiary issues," Harrington said. "Lt. (Steve) Kohne and the sheriff's department did an excellent job on this investigation.

"In speaking with the niece of the victim, they appreciate the efforts of the sheriff's department in bringing this case to a resolution."

Under Indiana law, a person commits voluntary manslaughter if he or she kills someone while acting under sudden heat - in other words, if a person is provoked.

Watkins admitted during today's hearing that Cooke, of Santa Clara, Calif., had picked him up hitchhiking near Ohio.

He said he could not recall the exact location, however, because "I was intoxicated at the time."

Watkins said the two men stopped in Lafayette, where they drank alcoholic beverages together and then got a hotel room at the Ramada Inn.

He said they met and hung out with people at the hotel's pool, where Watkins borrowed shorts from someone to go swimming.

Watkins said he then went to their hotel room, where Cooke was. He claimed that Cooke made a "physical sexual advance."

Angry and upset, Watkins then pulled out a knife and stabbed Cooke twice.

For more on this story, read Friday's Journal & Courier.

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2 Gangster Disciples gang members sentenced to 40+ years for cocaine sales

June 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Pair receive 40 years plus in drug case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Two men received lengthy sentences Tuesday after being found guilty in April of multiple cocaine-related charges in Tippecanoe County.

Eric B. Nevels, 25, Lafayette, was sentenced to 46 years in prison. His co-defendant, Anthony E. Price Jr., 25, Chicago, was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

Jurors found both men guilty of two counts of dealing cocaine, two counts of possession of cocaine and one count of conspiracy to deal cocaine following a three-day trial in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

All counts were Class A felonies, the highest offense level in Indiana, behind murder.

Nevels also was convicted of maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony. He also had been on probation for unrelated charges at the time of his arrest.

The charges stemmed from an investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit. Undercover officers purchased cocaine from them on multiple occasions.

After getting a search warrant for Nevels' apartment, police found 24 grams or 0.85 ounce of cocaine, scales and other drug paraphernalia.

Nevels and Price were arrested last August. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said both men are known members of the Gangster Disciples.

June 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2008 child molesting case yields guilty plea

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man has admitted to having sexual contact with two sisters, ages 6 and 9, who were temporarily in his care.

Joaquin Chavez, 29, now of Indianapolis, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to two counts of child molesting, each a Class C felony.

A sentencing hearing was scheduled for July 22.

Judge Thomas Busch will decide then whether or not to accept Chavez's plea.

Charges were filed after Chavez contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office last November. He apparently was upset about accusations made against him by the girls' mother.

According to court documents, Chavez had watched the girls for about 15 days in 2008 while their mother was in Mexico.

The girls' mother told a sheriff's deputy that her daughters only recently approached her, claiming Chavez had "forced himself upon them" on multiple occasions.

Both girls were treated last summer for genital infections that required antibiotics.

Chavez recently was treated at an Indianapolis clinic for a genital infection.

Chavez, however, denied committing any acts that could have spread his infection to the girls.

June 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-pastor pleads guilty to child seduction

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former youth pastor in Lafayette faces three to six years incarceration for having sexual contact with a 16-year-old girl in his care.

Robert L. McFadden III, 40, of Lafayette pleaded guilty this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to three counts of child seduction, each a Class D felony.

A sentencing hearing was scheduled for July 9. Judge Randy Williams will decide then whether to accept McFadden's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The charges against McFadden stem from an investigation by the Lafayette Police Department. Detectives were called to the 16-year-old's high school on April 16 after two classmates told administrators the girl may have been raped by someone later identified as McFadden.

McFadden was not charged with rape.

According to court documents, the teenager told detectives that she was given massages by McFadden on April 12 and April 14 that led to sexual contact.

Under questions posed during today's sentencing hearing by his attorney, Earl McCoy, McFadden admitted to fondling and having sexual intercourse with the girl.

The counts to which McFadden pleaded guilty dealt specifically with incidents that occurred on April 14.

In Indiana, the age of sexual consent is 16. However, a person can be charged with child seduction if the victim is between the ages of 16 and 18 and the suspect is a guardian or caretaker.

A Class D felony is punishable by six months to three years in prison for each count. However, under his plea agreement only two of three counts to which McFadden pleaded will be served consecutively.

The third charge can run concurrently to those offenses.

If the plea agreement is accepted, a fourth count of child seduction would be dropped.

McFadden most recently was a youth pastor at Evangelical Covenant Church of Lafayette, from August 2007 to November 2009, the church's lead pastor previously told the Journal & Courier.

He was not employed there when the child seduction allegations occurred.

June 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Repeat drug dealer gets 40 years

A Chicago man arrested during an undercover police investigation was sentenced Friday to 40 years in prison for selling crack cocaine.

Phillip E. Spratt, 33, was found guilty of two counts of dealing cocaine and one count of possession of cocaine, all felonies, during a jury trial in April in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

He was arrested in January 2008 during a joint investigation by the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force and the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Spratt had at least three prior convictions in Cook County, Ill., including possession of a firearm and dealing cocaine.

June 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

OWI repeater heads back to prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A rural West Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to four years in prison for his sixth conviction for operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

The sentence handed down to Michael J. Barnes, 58, will be followed by four years on work release and two years on probation. His driver's license also was suspended for one year.

Barnes had pleaded guilty in March in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to operating a vehicle while intoxicated with a prior conviction for OWI causing death, a Class C felony. He also admitted to being a habitual substance offender.

His attorney, Chief Public Defender Amy Hutchison, said Wednesday that Barnes is an alcoholic who suffers from depression and drinks to "mask the pain."

"It's sad to see a case like this," Hutchison said. "He feels like he let down not only himself, but his family. ... He's struggled for a number of years with alcohol and alcoholism."

Both Hutchison and Special Prosecutor Rob Ives noted that Barnes is considered a threat to the community.

"This is a situation where it's really hard to see what remedy will protect society or himself, for that matter," Ives said.

The most recent charges stemmed from Barnes' arrest on April 24, 2009.

At the time, Barnes was serving the probation portion of a total, 10-year sentence for the 2002 crash. His 9-year-old daughter, Sarah, died at the scene of the two-vehicle crash on Indiana 26 East.

Judge Thomas Busch presided over that case and the most recent allegations. The judge ordered Barnes to serve the remainder of his probation -- 2 years and six months -- for the 2002 crash in prison. But that will be almost negated by a combined 700 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

June 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Accomplice gets 8 years in burglary, beating

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A man was sentenced Tuesday to eight years in prison, followed by seven years on probation, for his role in a residential burglary in downtown Lafayette in December, during which two people were assaulted.

Latroy "Troy" Devon Maxwell, 23, pleaded guilty in May in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to one count of robbery causing bodily injury, a Class B felony.

He was one of three people charged with breaking into an apartment at 317 S. Sixth St. -- just three blocks from the Lafayette Police Department -- on Dec. 28.

According to court documents, roommates Charles Helvie II and Heida Mass returned home that night and were attacked shortly after stepping inside. Helvie, 44, was stabbed twice in his abdomen, requiring surgery at Home Hospital.

Both Helvie and Mass, 39, were repeatedly struck with a four-way tire iron, causing facial cuts and bruises.

According to information presented during Tuesday's sentencing hearing, investigators believe that Maxwell played a lesser role. Maxwell told Judge Don Daniel he had not realized his co-defendants brought weapons to the apartment.

He also had not realized Helvie had been stabbed.

"The fact that it went so badly wrong, I am not going to find that as an aggravator," Daniel said, prompting loud applause from Maxwell's family and friends.

Information that Maxwell provided to Lafayette detectives also was crucial in the investigation.

That prompted his attorney, Deputy Public Defender Michael Trueblood, to request that Maxwell be sent to the Indiana Department of Correction from the Tippecanoe County Jail as soon as possible.

"Because of his cooperation, he has received some threats," Trueblood said.

Maxwell also was given a combined 296 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

Items taken from Helvie and Mass' apartment included two laptop computers, a Blu-ray DVD play and $500 cash.

Mass told investigators that she recognized Smith, whom she knew through a friend. She also said Smith previously stole her apartment key.

Cases against Maxwell's co-defendants, Brian Christopher Smith, 25, and Quentin J. Shotwell, 27, are pending in Circuit Court. Shotwell, who is Maxwell's brother, is scheduled to stand trial later this month.

June 2, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen admits taking SUV in crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager has admitted to leading police on a chase in a stolen vehicle last December — causing a two-vehicle crash outside the Tippecanoe County Office Building that seriously injured two people.

Levi J. Saltsman, 16, pleaded guilty Wednesday afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to two counts of resisting law enforcement, a Class C felony, and auto theft, a Class D felony.

He will be sentenced July 28 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Saltsman — the youngest defendant to ever go before Busch — faces up to 19 years in prison.

During Wednesday's guilty plea hearing, Saltsman admitted that he stole a Ford Expedition the night of Dec. 10 from a parking lot at Market Square Lanes, off Elmwood Avenue in Lafayette.

The Expedition was running when Saltsman's came upon it.

Within minutes, two Lafayette police officers spotted the sport utility vehicle on North 12th Street near Greenbush Street. They tried to stop the Expedition.

"I saw the lights on the cars," Saltsman said Wednesday, referring to the police vehicles.

Under questions posed by his attorney, Jon Phillips, Saltsman admitted that he did not pull over and instead accelerated to "avoid the police."

The 65-second chase ended when the Expedition crashed at Third and Columbia streets into a Pontiac G6 driven by Damon A. Mathewson, 31, of Lafayette. His wife, Kinzie Mathewson, 28, was in the passenger seat.

Damon Mathewson was hospitalized for five days at Home Hospital.

Kinzie Mathewson suffered a traumatic brain injury and significant damage to one leg, according to prior court testimony. She was taken to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

An update on her condition was not available Wednesday.

Saltsman, who was 15 years old at the time of the crash, was waived this past January from juvenile jurisdiction by Tippecanoe Superior Court 3 Judge Loretta Rush.

She cited Saltsman's extensive criminal history, which included arrests for theft, auto theft and escape.

Charges against Saltsman's passenger, a 14-year-old boy, were handled in juvenile court.

The Lafayette Police Department previously said that the chase reached speeds of 65 mph.

June 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Robbery, beating nets Lafayette man 8 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced this morning to eight years in prison, followed by seven years on probation, for his role in a residential burglary and beating of two people

Latroy "Troy" Devon Maxwell, 23, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to one count of robbery causing bodily injury, a Class B felony.

He was one of three people accused of breaking into an apartment Dec. 28 at 317 S. South St. in downtown Lafayette.

According to court documents, roommates Charles Helvie II and Heida Mass returned home that night and were attacked shortly after stepping inside.

Helvie suffered two stab wounds to his abdomen. Both Helvie and Mass were repeatedly struck with a four-way tire iron, causing facial cuts and bruising.

Maxwell told Judge Don Daniel that he had not realized his co-defendants, Brian Christopher Smith, 25, and Quentin J. Shotwell, 27, brought weapons to the apartment.

He also said he had not realized someone had been stabbed.

"The fact that it went so badly wrong, I am not going to find that as an aggravator," Daniel said, prompting loud applause from Maxwell's family and friends during the sentencing hearing.

Maxwell's attorney, Michael Trueblood, asked that Maxwell be sent to the Indiana Department of Corrections as soon as possible - reportedly because Maxwell has been threatened at the Tippecanoe County Jail for cooperating with law enforcement.

Smith and Shotwell's cases are pending in Circuit Court.

June 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Mom of Aiyana Gauvin charged with child battery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The March 16, 2005, death of 4-year-old Aiyana Gauvin following months of physical abuse prompted a re-evaluation in Tippecanoe County of how well the community cares for its children.

Aiyana's stepmother, Michelle Gauvin, currently is serving a life sentence in prison for the girl's murder. Her father,

Christian Gauvin, is serving a 50-year sentence for fatal neglect of a dependent.

Now Aiyana's biological mother, Cassandra B. Davis, is accused of hitting her 13-year-old daughter - Aiyana's older sister.

Davis, who formerly went by her maiden name, Cassandra Robinson, was charged today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with battery on a child, a Class D felony, and misdemeanor battery.

She was released this morning from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $250 cash bond.

Attempts to reach Davis were not successful. A cell phone she provided the Journal & Courier in December rang to the voicemail for another person on this afternoon.

Tippecanoe County's Web-based court database did not indicate whether Davis had hired or been appointed an attorney.

The charges against Davis stem from a 911 call Saturday night from her father's north end home to the Lafayette Police Department.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Davis' daughter had been visiting her grandfather when Davis and her husband showed up. The 13-year-old, who answered the front door, claimed her mother pushed her aside to get inside the home.

The girl also told a police officer that her mother struck her leg and jaw with an open hand after the girl would not let Davis use her phone.

She had minor injuries consistent with those allegations, including red marks on the inside thigh of her right leg and a red mark and scratch on her chest, just under her chin.

Police Chief Don Roush said Davis does not have custody of the 13-year-old. Davis told the J&C in December that she shared custody with the girl's father.

She did not have custody of Aiyana when the girl died.

May 29, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea coming in 1980 cold case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Fort Worth, Texas, man whose DNA was linked last year to an unsolved homicide at a Lafayette hotel in 1980 is expected to enter a guilty plea on June 10.

The hearing date for Dion Watkins, 51, was scheduled Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 by Watkins' attorney, Deputy Public Defender Michael Trueblood, and Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Harrington said a plea agreement has been offered. Details of that plea agreement won't be made public until the June 10 hearing.

Watkins is charged with murder and felony murder in the July 15, 1980, stabbing death of William J. Cooke, 49, at the former Ramada Inn on Indiana 26 East.

DNA from a cigarette butt found in Cooke's hotel room was a match to Watkins, who was being held in a Texas prison on unrelated charges until April -- when he was extradited to Tippecanoe County.

According to court documents filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, investigators believe that Cooke, of Santa Clara, Calif., had offered a ride to Watkins, who was possibly hitchhiking.

They stopped in Lafayette and checked into the Ramada Inn.

When hotel staff found Cooke's body, his pants pockets were pulled inside out, and change was scattered on the bed. Cooke had been stabbed twice.

Witnesses at the time told police they met a younger man who allegedly confessed to killing an older male -- Cooke -- and then taking the man's wallet, car keys and diamond ring.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office reopened the unsolved homicide last year after being contacted by Cooke's family. The cigarette butt that linked investigators to Watkins was collected as evidence in 1980.

It was sent to the Indiana State Police lab in Lowell in early 2009.

Watkins DNA was in the national Combined DNA Index System because of his unrelated criminal convictions in Texas -- in 1992 for theft and in 2007 for reckless bodily injury to an elderly person.

DNA analysis was not available to law enforcement in 1980.

Cooke's family members previously told the Journal & Courier that Cooke had visited them in Florida and was driving back to California when he was murdered.

A message left Friday afternoon for Cooke's nephew was not immediately returned.

Each murder charge against Watkins is punishable by 45 to 65 years in prison.

May 29, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed for threat with knife

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is suspected of burning his girlfriend's forehead with a cigarette and threatening her with a 14-inch "survival" knife.

Paul E. Smith III, 25, was charged this week in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with felony counts of attempted battery by means of a deadly weapon; criminal confinement resulting in bodily injury; and criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon.

He also was charged with misdemeanor battery.

Smith was being held Friday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Smith and his girlfriend got into an argument Sunday afternoon at Smith's home on North 10th Street.

The woman told Lafayette police officers that Smith held her down while screaming at her. A cigarette Smith was smoking burned the woman's forehead above her left eye.

She told officers that Smith grabbed a knife and began slicing and stabbing her bags, which the woman packed to leave the apartment. She said the knife was then pressed against her neck, behind her left ear.

The woman was able to send a text message to her mother, who called police.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office requested the $25,000 surety bond, which is more than double the standard bond -- $10,000 -- for a Class C felony.

That request was based on Smith's alleged connection to white supremacy groups and because the incident involved a weapon.

May 28, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Father pleads guilty to beating children

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces between one and six years on community corrections for striking his 11-year-old daughter and 13-year-old son with an electrical extension cord.

Rhon R. Ranier, 32, pleaded guilty Thursday morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of battery on a child, a Class D felony. He will be sentenced July 6 by Judge Randy Williams.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the length of the sentence will be left to Williams.

But any incarceration will be on community corrections -- some combination of work release, house arrest or day reported -- followed by one year on probation.

According to court documents, the 11-year-old in March told a nurse and a counselor at her Lafayette elementary school that she was "whopped" by her father.

Photos were taken of a red welt on the girl's right leg and outline marks resembling an extension cord. She said her father allegedly "just went off" when her 13-year-old brother went to a friend's home without permission.

A Lafayette police officer also took photos of the boy's injuries, which included marks on his left arm and both legs in the outline of an extension cord.

The victims and other family members will be able to make sentencing recommendations at the July hearing.

Williams also will decide then whether to accept the plea agreement.

A Class D felony is punishable by six months to three years for each count

May 28, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

No jail time in child molesting case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man has been spared incarceration for exposing himself to and having sexual contact with a 5-year-old girl.

Instead, Glenn L. Fletcher, 66, was sentenced Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two years on Global Positioning System, or GPS, monitoring.

That's because the victims' parents, who attended the hearing, requested leniency. Judge Randy Williams told Fletcher that he otherwise would be headed to the Indiana Department of Correction.

According to court documents, Fletcher was accused of twice showing his genitals to the 5-year-old and fondling her. Fletcher, however, told West Lafayette investigators that the touching occurred when he was "tickling" the girl.

She told her aunt, who then told the girl's mother.

Fletcher pleaded guilty in March to performing sexual conduct in the presence of a minor, a Class D felony. Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, an additional count of child molesting, a Class C felony, was dropped.

He could have faced six months to three years incarceration.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman argued for a six-month prison term.

Fletcher's attorney, Earl McCoy, asked for community corrections so that Fletcher could continue working and supporting his family.

Fletcher, the chief financial officer at a Lafayette-based oil and gas distributor, had no prior criminal history, according to information presented during Thursday's hearing.

"This has been, for what it's worth, the most humiliating experience of my life," Fletcher said. "All I want to do is get it past me. I take full responsibility for my actions."

The girl's father testified that she is seeing a therapist and does not appear to be suffering from the incident.

The Journal & Courier typically does not victims of sexual-based crimes or their family members.

May 27, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Decade-old sexual assault brings 20-year sentence

A Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years in prison for accusations that he had sexual contact with a young girl more than a decade ago.

That was the maximum sentence Michael Joseph "Joe" Gaby faced after a Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury found him guilty of child molesting, a Class A felony, in April.

But Judge Thomas Busch on Wednesday also classified Gaby, 41, as a credit-restricted offender -- meaning he will receive one day of credit for every six days of incarceration.

In Indiana, prisoners typically receive credit time equal to each day spent behind bars.

The charge against Gaby stemmed from an accusation made in April 2009 by the now-teenage daughter of Gaby's former neighbor.

The girl, 16, told a Lafayette school teacher that she was raped once as a child.

That teacher then contacted the Lafayette Police Department. Criminal charges were filed in July 2009.

The girl testified during Gaby's two-day trial that she believed it happened when she was 3 or 4 years old. Indiana has no statute of limitations to prosecute a Class A felony, which is the highest criminal offense except for murder.

Gaby, who did not testify during his trial, told detectives that he remembered helping the girl change clothes once after she vomited.

But he denied any sexual contact.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Gaby gave a statement during Wednesday's sentencing hearing, during which he again maintained never touching the girl.

Gaby will have to provide his contact information to law enforcement for life for Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry after his release.

Zeman said she expects the credit restriction will be raised on appeal because the law took effect on July 1, 2008, well after the alleged crime was committed.

At issue is whether Gaby is being retroactively punished.

May 19, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 30 years after holding wife at gunpoint

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The night last September that Flavio M. Gonzalez threatened his wife, Yolanda, with a loaded revolver was not the first time an argument between the Lafayette couple turned violent.

In May 1999, Flavio Gonzalez punched her with a closed fist for not having dinner ready, according to Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Good-rich.

Then came an arrest for impaired driving in November 2008, during which he followed Yolanda Gonzalez's vehicle from Jefferson High School and tried to force her off the road.

"It's extremely telling of his character and his behavior," Goodrich said. She argued during a sentencing hearing Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 that Flavio Gonzalez, 40, should serve 30 years in prison for threatening his wife with the revolver.

Judge Thomas Busch agreed with that recommendation. The entire 30-year sentence will be served through the Indiana Department of Correction.

Busch considered the prior incidents aggravating factors.

The most recent accusations against Flavio Gonzalez stemmed from a heated quarrel at the family's home on Primrose Path, off County Road 200 East, on Sept. 1, 2009.

His anger was triggered by the $30 cost of an oil change for a vehicle that belonged to their eldest daughter.

According to court documents and trial testimony, Flavio Gonzalez made his wife say goodbye to their four daughters and forced her into their garage, where she was threatened with the revolver.

The gun was never fired.

Flavio Gonzalez was found guilty in March of felony criminal confinement, intimidation and domestic battery and misdemeanor battery following a three-day jury trial.

Jurors, however, were not able to reach a verdict on the lead charge, attempted murder, a Class A felony.

During Wednesday's hearing, Flavio Gonzalez apologized to his wife and daughters, who were not in the courtroom. Yolanda Gonzalez instead wrote a letter that was read by Goodrich.

His attorney, Brian Dekker, told Busch that the convictions could result in Flavio Gonzalez's U.S. citizen status being revoked. That would mean deportation to Mexico.

Dekker had argued for a 10-year prison sentence.

"He took responsibility for the crime," Dekker said. " ... If not temporarily, he has permanently lost his family."

Flavio Gonzalez was given a combined 534 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

May 11, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue student sentenced for Ecstasy sales

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Katy, Texas, man will serve a combination of community corrections and probation for selling Ecstasy pills from a West Lafayette residence that was used as a Purdue University fraternity house.

Christopher H. Song, 22, had pleaded guilty in March in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to dealing a controlled substance, a Class B felony.

He was sentenced Monday to eight years on probation -- two of those years recommended on house arrest through community corrections -- by Judge Randy Williams.

Williams also ordered that Song pay a $1,500 fine. That amount is slightly more than the profit Song made from selling roughly 140 Ecstasy pills at $9 per pill.

He admitted bringing the pills to West Lafayette from Texas.

The accusations against Song stemmed from a two-month investigation last fall by the West Lafayette Police Department into a high amount of traffic at 112 E. Oak St., Song's former residence.

The house was used by Lambda Phi Epsilon's Purdue chapter. Song previously attended Purdue, though he was not enrolled at the time of his arrest in November 2009.

According to court documents, items recovered from Song's home included a plastic bag containing marijuana; digital scales; and 359 Ecstasy pills hidden in an air freshener can.

Song was told by Williams that his sentence can be transferred to Texas.

The sentence handed down was in line with recommendations made by Tippecanoe County's probation department and the prosecutor's office.

May 10, 2010: WLFI TV

Heroin dealing cases on the rise
Crime Time special report: Part 1

Updated: Tuesday, 11 May 2010, 12:03 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 10 May 2010, 2:13 PM EDT

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - We may be in a recession, but the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor said one underground economy is alive and well.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he has seen a steady increase in drug crimes over the past couple of years. He said these drug dealers work like any other business trying to set up shop.

"The gangs have entered this area. They have cornered the drug market, and they are pushing these drugs out to the streets," he said.

Harrington said the demand for drugs is high.

"Drug dealers use the same principle of capitalism as anybody else," he said. "When you want to establish a new market, you lower your price. And then once you have a market, you slowly raise the price."

Harrington said use of one particular drug has been skyrocketing. He said heroin dealing cases increased about 400 percent between 2008 and 2009.

The prosecutor's office only had three heroin cases in 2007. That number went up to nine in 2008, and then jumped to 38 last year.

"So you can see the dramatic increase," Harrington said. "And based upon what we've done here this quarter, I anticipate that number to be higher this year."

And as the number of heroin cases climbs, Harrington said the circle of people affected is expanding.

"We're concerned about the age of those now turning to heroin," he said. The ones I see in court start with the 40-year-olds, 30-year-olds, 20-year-olds, and now we're seeing teenagers. And the concern is, 'How long before we start seeing younger teenagers involved in heroin?' Because right now that drug is so cheap out there."

"Simple supply and demand," said Lafayette Police Detective B.T. Brown. "If you have a lot of heroin, it's going to sell cheap, and a lot of people can get it."

Brown was part of the department's Drug Task Force from 2001 to 2008. He says right now you can get a small packet of heroin for about $30 in Tippecanoe County. In a place like Chicago, where supply is even higher, that same packet might go for only $10.

"Depending on who your friend is, selling it to you, if you can call him a friend, I don't think $30 is too bad," Brown said. "But if you do get tired of paying that price, it's very easy for you to travel to Chicago and buy your own."

Harrington said the drug market isn't just cash based.

"Guns have a value on the street, just like cash," he said. "And when the gangs are in town and they're dealing, they love guns. They want guns or cash."

That's when the prosecutor's office starts seeing an increase in crime across the board.

"The people that want to use the drugs, normally when they get addicted to crack-cocaine or heroin or meth, nothing else matters to them but those drugs," Harrington said. "They lose their jobs. They then start selling their property to pawn shops. And when they run out of that money, they start stealing."

Harrington said part of the reason we've seen such a huge jump in drug dealing charges is because law enforcement is cracking down.

Tune in to News Channel 18 on Tuesday to see how police and prosecutors are fighting this trend. And Wednesday we'll bring you an exclusive interview with a local man who has dealt with a powerful addiction to heroin.

May 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen pleads guilty to attempted robbery in WL

A Lafayette teenager faces possible incarceration for his involvement in an attempted strong-arm robbery last November on the Purdue University campus.

Zachary A. Johnson, 16, was charged as an adult with four felonies, including conspiracy to commit robbery, attempted robbery and attempted theft.

He pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to one of the counts and will be sentenced on June 11 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The attempted robbery occurred near Purdue's Armory off University Street on Nov. 3.

A Lafayette youth, who was skateboarding there, told investigators that he was approached from behind by two people who demanded all his money.

One of the suspects told the victim that he had a knife and a gun. The youth ran from the scene -- while followed by the suspects -- and went inside the Circle K gas station at Stadium and Northwestern avenues.

Johnson's codefendant, Christopher D. Clemons, 17, also was charged as an adult for his involvement. He pleaded guilty in April to attempted theft.

May 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Softball league treasurer pleads guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former treasurer for a Lafayette-area youth baseball and softball organization has admitted to taking several thousands of dollars for personal use.

Dean A. Trapp, 47, of Lafayette was charged on April 30 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with money laundering, a Class C felony; theft, a Class D felony, and; six counts of forgery, each count a Class C felony.

He turned himself in after an arrest warrant was issued Monday.

Trapp pleaded guilty to all counts during an initial hearing Friday morning, court staff said. He's due to be sentenced June 23 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Trapp had been treasurer for the East Tipp Summer Rec League since 2005.

He resigned in late February shortly before the league's president contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office about missing funds.

East Tipp Summer Rec is a baseball and softball league for children who attend Hershey Elementary School and East Tipp Middle School.

According to court documents, Trapp is accused of writing roughly 120 checks made out to "cash" in amounts

ranging from $200 to $2,000.

Those checks, written between May 2005 and November 2009, totaled $81,955.

Sheriff's investigators previously told the Journal & Courier that they suspect Trapp used the money on personal expenses.

Each Class C felony count against Trapp is punishable by two to eight years incarceration.

A message left Friday afternoon for Trapp's Indianapolis-based attorney, Christopher Zoeller, was not immediately returned.

May 7, 2010: WLFI TV

Not guilty plea in child seduction case
Man allegedly had sex with 16-year-old

Updated: Friday, 07 May 2010, 6:02 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 07 May 2010, 5:37 PM EDT

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man pleads not guilty to felony charges of child seduction.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, 40-year-old Robert McFadden was in court Friday morning. A judge scheduled McFadden's jury trial for August 3rd.

McFadden is accused of fondling and having sex with a 16-year-old girl last month. According to court documents, McFadden was giving the girl a massage on April 12th when he touched her inappropriately. The documents say, two days later he had sex with her.

He was arrested on April 23rd and posted bond that same day.

May 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man found guilty of not registering as offender

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man with three prior convictions for sexual-based offenses will be sentenced this month following his conviction Wednesday on charges stemming from his past crimes

David D. Sasser, 46, was charged with failure to register as a sex offender, a Class D felony, and failure to register as a sex offender while having a prior conviction, a Class C felony.

It took a jury about six hour to reach the guilty as charged verdict.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Sasser's offenses could result in a two to eight year penalty range. He is slated to be sentenced May 27.

Sasser took the stand Wednesday afternoon in his own defense -- telling jurors that he went to the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office to register in 2008 after moving here from Salt Lake City.

At the time, sheriff's Detective Greg Haltom, who is in charge of Tippecanoe County's registry, could only find that Sasser had a 1996 conviction for sexual battery in Tennessee. That meant Sasser did not have to register.

"After someone in authority told me -- according to the state of Indiana -- that I no longer had to register, I was happy," Sasser said. " ... I'd been through this too many times to mess around."

Sasser, however, has two prior convictions for sexual-based crimes: in 1998 in Kentucky and in 2004 in Missouri.

In Indiana, offenders must provide their home and work addresses to law enforcement for life if the offender has been convicted of more than one sex offense, according to Haltom, who also testified Wednesday.

Sasser said he learned this on Jan. 12, 2009, when he was stopped by a West Lafayette police officer for an unrelated offense.

The officer told Sasser his information needed to be updated within 72 hours.

Sasser and Haltom disagree on what happened next -- Sasser claimed he went to the sheriff's department that day; Haltom said Sasser did not.

Criminal charges were filed against Sasser later that month.

Sasser was represented by Deputy Public Defender Michael Trueblood.

May 5, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen expect to plead guilty in chase, crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager is expected to enter a guilty plea next month in connection to a Dec. 10 police pursuit and subsequent crash that seriously injured a Lafayette woman.

Levi J. Saltsman, 16, is scheduled to plead guilty on June 2 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, the teenager's attorney, Jon Phillips, confirmed today. Phillips declined to comment on details of Saltsman's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office before the hearing.

Saltsman was 15 years old when he was waived in January from juvenile jurisdiction by Tippecanoe Superior Court 3 Judge Loretta Rush. In her order, Rush cited Saltsman's extensive criminal history, which includes arrests for theft, auto theft and escape.

Phillips had argued in January to have Saltsman's case handled in juvenile court.

He is charged as an adult with two counts of resisting law enforcement; two counts of criminal recklessness; one count of auto theft; and one count of conspiracy to commit auto theft.

All of those counts are felonies. Saltsman also is charged with aggressive driving, a misdemeanor.

Saltsman is accused of stealing a Ford Expedition from Market Square Lanes on Dec. 10 and leading two Lafayette police officers on a 65-second chase into downtown Lafayette.

The Expedition crashed at Third and Columbia streets into a smaller vehicle driven by Damon A. Mathewson, 31, of Lafayette. Mathewson's wife, Kinzie Mathewson, was in the passenger seat.

She suffered a traumatic brain injury in the crash. An update on Kinzie Mathewson's condition was not immediately

available this afternoon.

Saltsman has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since Jan. 12 on a $15,000 surety bond. The most serious charge against him - resisting law enforcement - is a Class C felony that is punishable by two to eight years in prison for each count.

April 28, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man's guilty plea could result in his deportation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man faces two to eight years in prison for fleeing from a one-vehicle crash that he caused, fatally injuring a passenger.

Mario E. Lopez, 37, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to leaving the scene of an accident that resulted in injury or death, a Class C felony.

A sentencing date was not immediately available.

The wreck took place on Oct. 27, 2009, in the 8300 block of Indiana 43 North. A pickup truck Lopez was driving went into a ditch, striking machinery used to place utility lines.

Lopez's passenger, Everado Delreal, 41, of Boswell, was pinned in the front passenger seat. He later died at St. Elizabeth Central hospital.

According to court documents, Lopez told investigators that he and Delreal had gone to a car auction in Illinois the previous day. While driving back to the Lafayette area overnight, Delreal was getting sleepy, and they switched places with Lopez taking the wheel.

Witnesses reported seeing a man outside the crashed pickup. That man was then seen running into nearby cornfields.

Lopez, who suffered facial injuries, was found at Home Hospital about four hours later.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a hold placed on Lopez, a native of Honduras. His guilty plea could result in deportation

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April 24, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces additional porn charges

A Lafayette man already indicted on federal child pornography charges is facing additional charges.

Christopher L. Laraneta, 40, of Lafayette, was charged Thursday in U.S. District Court in Hammond with one count of advertisement of child pornography, two counts of distribution of child pornography, four counts of receipt of child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography.

According to Lafayette Police Department Capt. Bruce Biggs, Laraneta is in federal custody.

He had earlier been charged with two counts: activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography, and criminal forfeiture in violation of exploitation of minors.

The earlier charges stemmed from allegations that he uploaded images depicting child pornography to a popular image-sharing Web site in 2009.

According to Biggs, the new charges were filed after authorities examined Laraneta's computer, which was seized after a search warrant was issued in December.

"At this time, I don't believe any more charges will be filed," Biggs said.

The case is being jointly investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Lafayette Police Department and the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

No court dates had been set as of Friday

April 24, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

'Ashamed,' ex-teacher gets probation in pot case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Klondike Middle School teacher received overwhelming support during a sentencing hearing Friday for charges related to helping a friend harvest marijuana at a Lafayette residence.

About 25 people filled the gallery in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. And 86 people wrote letters on behalf of James R. Page, 62, to Judge Don Daniel. Among them were Page's former students, friends and colleagues.

Daniel sentenced Page, of Lafayette, to one year on unsupervised probation following a guilty plea in February to possession of marijuana greater than 30 grams, a Class D felony.

He also was ordered to complete 96 hours of community service within a six-month time frame. Page told Daniel he already has contacted his church and Lafayette nonprofit agencies about volunteering.

"I'm a better person now. I'm walking closer to the Lord," Page said. "My life has changed because of this. ... I felt like a hypocrite. I felt like I let a lot of people down."

Charges against Page and his co-defendant, Samuel D. Patterson, 60, of Lafayette, stemmed from a routine marijuana-spotting mission on Sept. 12, 2009, by the Indiana State Police.

During a search of Patterson's home off Old U.S. 231 South, about 35 marijuana plants were found growing outside. Several more were found growing in the basement.

A shed appeared to have been set up as a drying room.

Two days after the arrests, Page was placed on administrative leave from Klondike, where he was a seventh-grade wellness teacher. He resigned a month later -- ending a 39-year career with Tippecanoe School Corp.

Page on Friday apologized to his family, friends, TSC and the court.

"I'm just very sorry, embarrassed and I'm very ashamed," he said.

According to Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss, Page told a Tippecanoe County probation officer that he has recreationally used marijuana from age 22 until his arrest in September.

That was essentially the entire time Page was employed by TSC.

"The irony of this is, he was a counselor and health teacher," Biss told Daniel. "As a teacher, he was in a position of trust. He was a role model."

Biss, however, agreed with the probation department's recommendation that Page serve one year on probation. Page's attorney, Wayne Fountain, had also asked that the conviction be entered as a Class A misdemeanor.

Daniel said it could be considered after Page successfully completes probation.

Patterson pleaded guilty in February to the same offense as Page. He was sentenced in March to one year on supervised probation and six months on unsupervised probation.

Neither man was charged with dealing marijuana.

April 23, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Klondike teacher sentenced

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Klondike Middle School teacher was sentenced this afternoon to one year on unsupervised probation for helping a friend harvest marijuana at a Lafayette residence.

James R. Page, 62, of Lafayette pleaded guilty in February in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to possession of marijuana greater than 30 grams, a Class D felony.

In handing down the sentence, Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel ordered that Page complete 96 hours of community service in the next six months.

During the hearing, Page apologized to his family, former co-workers, and the Tippecanoe School Corp.

“I felt like a hypocrite. I felt like I let a lot of people down,” Page said.

Charges against Page and his co-defendant, Samuel D. Patterson, 60, of Lafayette, stemmed from a routine marijuana-spotting mission on Sept. 12, 2009, by the Indiana State Police

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April 20, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Two convicted of dealing cocaine

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man and a Chicago man will be sentenced in June following their convictions Thursday on multiple cocaine-related charges.

A three-day jury trial for Eric B. Nevels, 25, of Lafayette and Anthony E. Price Jr., 25, of Chicago wrapped up Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

It took a jury 2 1/2 hours to find both men guilty of two counts of dealing cocaine, possession of cocaine within 1,000 feet of a school and a single count each of conspiracy to deal cocaine. All the charges are class A felonies.

Nevels was also convicted on a class D felony count of maintaining a common nuisance.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, the charges stemmed from an incident in August 2009 when the Lafayette Street Crimes Unit was able to make multiple cocaine purchases from the two men.

After obtaining a search warrant for Nevels' apartment, police discovered 24 grams of cocaine, baggies, scales and other drug paraphernalia there, Harrington said.

Both men will be sentenced June 8.

April 20, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Village Pantry robber to serve time

By CURT SLYDER; cslyder@jconline.com

A rural Lafayette woman who admitted to robbing the same Lafayette convenience store three times over a period of several months will spend five years in prison

Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams sentenced Jacqueline S. Aper, 51, on Thursday to six years for each of three felony robberies committed at the Village Pantry at 1920 Main St. between Oct. 19, 2008, and Jan. 29, 2009.

Two of the sentences will be served together.

The judge then ordered eight years of the sentence to be served, with five to be served in prison and three to be served on either work release or home detention. That will be followed by four years of supervised probation.

Aper admitted she committed the robberies while abusing crack cocaine. In each instance she kept her hand in her pocket, implying she had a weapon.

She was arrested in February 2009, after police released images from surveillance cameras.

Aper was originally charged with five robberies at the same store over that time period. But two charges were dropped in a plea agreement.

A remorseful Aper said the robberies came during a low point in her life.

"My deepest apologies go out to the clerks of the Village Pantry and their families," Aper said. She said she has since been undergoing treatment for her addiction. "I'm deeply remorseful, ashamed and embarrassed."

Several people testified on her behalf, saying she has been undergoing substance abuse counseling and attending church regularly since being released from jail.

Her boss, Lafayette attorney Charlie Vaughan, also testified for her. He has employed her several years at his farm to take care of his horses.

"She's the best help I've ever had," Vaughan said, arguing that her sentence should be limited to work release. "I don't think it would serve society at all to incarcerate her."

Defense attorney Marcel Katz argued for an eight-year sentence to be served on house arrest or work release, saying her crimes were committed over a short period "when she hit bottom" and that she has worked to turn her life around.

Deputy Prosecutor John Schafer argued for a 14-year sentence, noting an earlier criminal record in Florida and Indiana on alcohol, drug and burglary offenses and that her recent crimes had profoundly affected the community. "The punishment has to fit the crime."

In his decision, Williams said the aggravating factors outweighed the mitigating factors, while acknowledging Aper's remorse.

Williams noted that Aper had the ability to care for the horses between the times she was committing her crimes. "That suggests to me you had the ability to make decisions."

April 20, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Couple sentenced for infant's injuries

STAFF REPORTS

Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch denied a motion this afternoon to override the verdicts in the trials of a Lafayette couple convicted of intentionally causing injuries that hospitalized their infant daughter two years ago

The judge said he didn't believe the baby's injuries were accidental but were caused by shaking the baby.

Busch then sentenced Ryan P. Rogers, 28, to six years in prison and four years probation. His wife, Careena N. Kelly, 22, received six years of probation.

Kelly and Rogers' daughter, Hailee Rogers, was 3 weeks old when she was flown on June 5, 2008, from Home Hospital's emergency room to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

The girl had suffered a serious head injury

April 12, 2010: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for dealing meth
Faces 10 years in prison

Updated: Monday, 12 Apr 2010, 2:31 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 12 Apr 2010, 1:31 PM EDT

- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces ten years in prison for felony charges of dealing methamphetamine.

According to Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington, 24-year-old Randy Farrell was sentenced Monday morning in the county's Superior Court.

Judge Randy Williams sentenced Farrell to 13 years, ten of which will be executed in prison. Farrell will be on probation for the remaining three years.

Farrell's charges started from a January 2009 investigation in which officers in the Lafayette street crimes unit bought meth from him on several occasions.

He has prior convictions of theft, burglary and escape from community corrections.

April 9, 2010: WLFI TV

Habitual offender gets two decades
18 year sentence for 21-year-old

Updated: Friday, 09 Apr 2010, 11:46 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 09 Apr 2010, 11:46 PM EDT

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man is sentenced to more than a decade in jail for being a habitual offender. Prosecutor Pat Harrington says 21-year-old Seth Darland got an 18 year sentence. He will spend 14 years in jail, two years on community corrections, and two years on probation.

Darland committed burglaries with two others in 2008. The trio broke into a neighbor's home and a former employer's house. They stole TVs, jewelry and money. Darland has a history of stealing. In 2005 he was arrested for residential entry and theft. In 2007 he was taken into custody for forgery and theft.

April 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2 charged in north end beating

STAFF REPORTS

Two Lafayette teenagers are accused of seriously beating up a Lafayette man, reportedly over money.

Cody L. Bryant, 19, and Johnny L. Ellison, 18, are both charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with robbery resulting in serious bodily injury; burglary; residential entry; battery resulting in serious bodily injury; and theft.

All counts are felonies.

Bryant and Ellison were each being held Thursday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

The charges stem from an investigation on April 2 at a home on North 14th Street. There, officers with the Lafayette Police Department found Wendell Washburn, 58, with extensive facial injuries.

Blood was found smeared on the walls and in several parts of the home. Wendell told officers he had been jumped by two males named "Johnny" and "Cody."

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Washburn was admitted to intensive care and had bleeding on his brain.

He was no longer listed as a patient at St. Elizabeth East hospital as of Wednesday.

Ellison was identified as a suspect when his aunt walked up to Washburn's house while police were investigating.

Bryant and Ellison both allegedly implicated the other.

April 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges follow WL investigation into 'party drug'

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Numerous criminal charges have been filed against a West Lafayette woman accused of selling Ecstasy pills and cocaine from her home at Ritchfield Apartments.

Desma M. Brown, 34, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with four counts of dealing a controlled substance; two counts of dealing cocaine; three counts of neglect of a dependent; and 10 other felonies.

She was ordered held on a $100,000 surety bond in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

Brown's arrest on April 1 by the West Lafayette Police Department's narcotics unit is representative of the agency's increased focus into Ecstasy use by Purdue University students.

"We made it a point to focus on Ecstasy because we believe Ecstasy has become too socially acceptable with college-aged kids," said Lt. Troy Harris, commander of West Lafayette's investigative division.

"They don't understand how harmful it can be."

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Ecstasy and other so-called "party pills" can cause anxiety, paranoia, muscle tension and tremors, among other symptoms.

The risk of heart or kidney failure is increased if the pills are taken during times of physical exertion or in hot environments, such as a crowded party.

Last November, West Lafayette arrested a Katy, Texas, man for selling Ecstasy from an off-campus residence used as a Purdue fraternity house.

That man, Christopher H. Song, 22, pleaded guilty in March in Superior Court 1 to dealing a controlled substance, a Class B felony. He will be sentenced May 10.

Brown had been under investigation for the past four to six weeks, Harris said.

Her arrest stems from at least five different purchases - 10 Ecstasy pills and an "eight ball," or 3.5 grams of cocaine, among them - made by a confidential informant.

West Lafayette police served a search warrant at Brown's apartment off Yeager Road on April 1.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, items recovered included a can with a false bottom - found in a diaper bag - that had plastic bags with Ecstasy; plastic bags containing cocaine that were hidden between mattresses; and partially burnt marijuana joints.

At the time of her arrest, Brown was baby-sitting her 3-month-old grandchild, Harris said.

Brown lived at Ritchfield Apartments with two of her children, according to information she told Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams during an initial hearing Wednesday afternoon.

Williams appointed a public defender to represent her.

Brown initially told the judge she planned to hire a private attorney but, after learning her bond was set at $100,000, said she could not afford to do so.

Five of the charges against Brown are a Class A felony - the highest criminal offense level in Indiana, under murder. Each count is punishable by 20 to 50 years incarceration

April 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Years later, man found guilty of molestation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces 20 to 50 years of incarceration after he was found guilty Wednesday of having sexual contact with a young girl more than a decade ago.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury deliberated for about four hours before returning the verdict — guilty of child molesting, a Class A felony — against Michael Joseph "Joe" Gaby.

He will be sentenced May 26 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Gaby, 41, appeared crushed when the verdict was announced. The 12-person jury was individually polled at the request of his attorney, Dan Moore. Gaby sobbed while hugging his family afterward.

The charge stemmed from an accusation made last April by the now-teenage daughter of Gaby's former neighbor. She told a Lafayette School Corp. teacher that she was molested once as a child.

That teacher then contacted the Lafayette Police Department.

The 16-year-old testified Tuesday that it happened when she was 3 or 4 years old, when her family lived in the same north Lafayette apartment complex as Gaby.

The count against Gaby was a Class A felony because it involved allegations of penetration. Indiana has no statute of limitations to prosecute A felonies — the highest criminal offense level except for murder.

Gaby did not testify during the two-day trial. But his attorney argued that the teenager concocted the story after the topic of rape was discussed during a health class.

"I can't think of a worse accusation to be falsely accused of," Moore told jurors during closing arguments. " ... I can't explain why she may have lied.

"Teenagers, young people — they react sometimes without thinking ahead. It's hard for me to remember something that happened at 3 (years old)."

Lafayette Detective Joe Clyde, who testified both Tuesday and Wednesday, said Gaby told investigators that he recalled helping the girl change clothing once after she vomited.

But Gaby insisted that, if he did touch the girl, it was accidental.

"He had several responses and several ways he responded," Clyde told jurors. "He had several answers: 'I don't know.' 'Absolutely not on purpose.' 'If that's the case, I don't know honestly how it would have happened.'... 'I've never done that. I've never ever touched that girl.'"

The case was presented by Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman for the state.

According to court documents, an older sibling of the victim told investigators that Gaby allegedly fondled her on numerous occasions when she was younger.

Charges based on those accusations were never filed because of a five-year statute of limitations.

March 31, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man sentenced for role in home invasion

By SOPHIA VORAVON; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to 10 years in prison following his convictions for participating in a

drug-related attempted armed robbery at a north end apartment.

Tradell S. Marzette, 23, was found guilty March 4 of six Class B felonies -- conspiracy to commit armed robbery, attempted armed robbery and four counts of criminal confinement -- in connection to the April 18, 2009, home invasion.

Marzette denied being involved in planning or carrying out the crime throughout his three-day trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. He continues to assert his innocence.

During Wednesday's sentencing hearing, Judge Don Daniel considered the lack of remorse an aggravating factor -- noting that Marzette taunted jurors after the verdicts were read.

But Daniel suspended the majority of Marzette's total 27-year sentence, ordering that he serve two years on Tippecanoe County Community Corrections and 14 years on probation following his release from prison.

Some of Marzette's family members and friends, who filled the gallery in Circuit Court, sobbed when the sentence was handed down.

The sentence was significantly less than 25-year prison sentence recommended by Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss.

"I tried to give you as lenient of a sentence as I can with the severity of the crime," Daniel told Marzette, a father of two young children. "... This gives you the opportunity to prove you're the good person that your family and friends see in you."

Marzette was one of several people charged in connection to residential armed robberies in March, April and May 2009 in Tippecanoe County.

Their targets were alleged marijuana dealers.

Specifically, Marzette was one of four people accused of bursting into an apartment in the 1700 block of Vinton Street the morning of April 18.

But they went to the wrong residence. According to trial testimony from the victims, three of them were beaten with fists or firearms, then bound with extension cords.

The suspects fled when a tenant in an upstairs apartment fired one round from a shotgun at them.

Marzette on Wednesday was given a combined 366 days credit for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

Biss argued for an aggravated sentence, in part, because the offenses were crimes of violence and thoroughly planned beforehand. He said jurors feared for their safety after the verdicts were read.

March 31, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Appeal backfires on convicted rapist

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Purdue University student already sentenced to 93 years in prison for brutally raping a homeless woman deserves a tougher penalty for his "unspeakable violent acts," the Indiana Court of Appeals has ruled.

Jeffrey A. Akard, 35, of Peru, Ind., was found guilty in January 2009 of 10 felonies related to the Sept. 9, 2006, assault. He appealed the convictions and subsequent sentence by Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch.

Among the issues raised by Akard was whether the 93-year sentence was appropriate -- asking that it instead be reduced to 40 years.

The Indiana Court of Appeals disagreed. In an unprecedented and unanimous decision issued Tuesday, the panel of three judges ruled that Akard's sentence be increased to 118 years because of the crimes' heinous nature.

"It's my understanding that it's the first time ever in the state of Indiana where a defendant's sentence was revised upward," said Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman, who handled Akard's case.

"This is extremely significant."

The ruling could ultimately effect how defense attorneys file appeals, according to Joel Schumm, a clinical professor of law at Indiana University School of Law -- Indianapolis.

A message left Tuesday afternoon for Akard's attorney, Timothy Broden, seeking comment was unanswered as of 8:30 p.m.

In September 2006, Akard was a senior supervision major attending Purdue full time. He lived near 13th and Morton streets on Lafayette's north end.

Akard's arrest came after the victim, described in court documents as a prostitute, reported an attack in which she was kept in Akard's apartment for about 15 hours -- tied up, drugged, zapped with a stun gun, shown child pornography and repeatedly raped.

Jurors found him guilty of three counts of rape, a Class A felony; three counts of criminal deviate conduct, a Class A felony; two counts of criminal confinement, a Class B felony; and two counts of battery, a Class C felony, following a three-day trial.

Tuesday's 17-page appellate court ruling references a 2009 opinion by Indiana Supreme Court Justice Theodore Boehm in which Boehm wrote that the state's higher courts have authority to revise a sentence upward.But "we have never exercised it and do not expect to exercise it in the future except in the most unusual case."

The appellate court determined that Akard's was one of those cases.

"The violence and sinister mentality associated with an individual raping an adult is serious and disturbing," appellate Judge Mark L. Bailey wrote. "However, when these acts are premeditated, motivated and purposely carried out to satisfy an even more diabolical interest, the rape of an adult is indescribably more heinous.

"Based on Akard's character and the nature of the offenses, we conclude that this is a most unusual case that warrants the extreme rarity of this court invoking its authority to revise a sentence upward."

According to Schumm, the IU professor, the appellate court can only revise a sentence upward if a defendant challenges his or her sentence on appeal -- which is often.

"It will be interesting to see what defense lawyers do, as far as challenging sentences," he said. "Most people think of an appeal as a decrease in a sentence."

A spokeswoman for the Indiana Court of Appeals could not confirm whether the decision was unprecedented.

But Schumm said many in the legal field took note of Justice Boehm's 2009 opinion.

"Everyone had been waiting to see what would happen," he said. "Everyone has been talking this case (Akard's) today."

Akard's sentence for his Tippecanoe County conviction will be served after he completes a 14-year sentence in federal prison for possession of child pornography.

That stemmed from roughly 3,000 still photos and 169 digital videos "of sexually graphic images of underage children" found on a laptop seized during the rape investigation.

March 27, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Husband found guilty on 5 charges
Jury stops short on attempted murder count

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Flavio M. Gonzalez, 40, was found guilty early Friday of four felonies and one misdemeanor following a three-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

They included convictions for criminal confinement, intimidation and domestic battery.

However, despite deliberating nearly 13 hours, jurors were not able to agree whether the quarrel amounted to attempted murder, a Class A felony.

Attempted murder was the most significant charge Flavio Gonzalez faced.

He will be sentenced May 19 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The accusations against Flavio Gonzalez stemmed from a confrontation with his wife, Yolanda Gonzalez, on Sept. 1 at the family's home on Primrose Path, off County Road 200 East.

His anger was reportedly triggered by the cost of an oil change -- $30, according to trial testimony -- for a vehicle that belonged to their eldest daughter.

The argument then escalated, and Flavio Gonzalez retrieved a .22-caliber loaded revolver from their garage. The revolver was never fired.

During testimony Tuesday afternoon, Yolanda Gonzalez told jurors that she feared for her life. Flavio Gonzalez's defense attorney, Brian Dekker, argued that his client never planned to kill her.

Following the jury's verdicts, Flavio Gonzalez pleaded guilty to an additional count of battery with a prior conviction, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

That conviction stemmed from a 1999 incident involving Yolanda Gonzalez.

Typically, charges that reflect a prior conviction are not introduced until the first phase of a trial is completed.

Harrington said Dekker and Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich had agreed that Flavio Gonzalez would plead guilty to that offense if jurors convicted him of the underlying battery.

March 26, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette broker charged for mortgage fraud

STAFF REPORTS • March 26, 2010

The owner of a loan brokerage business in Mulberry is accused of swindling a client of $35,000 that the client

was owed from a refinanced mortgage.

James R. Hudson Jr., 44, of Lafayette is charged in Clinton Circuit Court with violating the Indiana Loan Broker Act, which is a Class D felony.

Hudson was arrested on March 19. He was released from the Clinton County Jail on March 22 after posting a $2,000 surety bond, jail staff said today.

The allegations were investigated by Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita's Prosecution Assistance Unit and the Clinton County prosecutor's office.

Hudson was the owner of Indiana Mortgage LLC in Mulberry. A telephone number for the business was disconnected as of this afternoon.

According to Rokita's office, Hudson allegedly brokered a refinanced mortgage for a Tippecanoe County man who should have received $46,603.

But Hudson is accused of giving the man a cashier's check for only $10,983 and taking the remainder for personal use - including a $308.20 check to Best Buy and a $1,250 check made to himself.

The victim reportedly was told that his amount was lower than expected because of tax liens for an unrelated business owned by the victim.

A home telephone listing for a James R. Hudson in Lafayette could not be found to reach Hudson for comment.

March 23, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Baby-sitter charged with falling asleep drunk
Toddler found outside in pajamas

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of being intoxicated and falling asleep while baby-sitting a neighbor's 2-year-old daughter Friday night — allowing the girl to somehow end up outside alone.

She was not physically harmed.

The man, Bradley R. Thornton, 48, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony. He also was charged with being a habitual offender.

Thornton was being held Monday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

His arrest came after another neighbor called the Lafayette Police Department about 10:30 p.m. Friday, reporting that a toddler was outside and unattended at 1103 Cincinnati St.

Baby-sitter charged with falling asleep drunk

Toddler found outside in pajamas

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; voravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of being intoxicated and falling asleep while baby-sitting a neighbor's 2-year-old daughter Friday night — allowing the girl to somehow end up outside alone.

The neighbor estimated that the toddler had been on the porch screaming for least 25 minutes. She was wearing only pajamas.

Chief Don Roush said Thornton was baby-sitting the girl.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Thornton was passed out inside when police arrived.

A Winnie the Pooh video was playing on the television.

Thornton is accused of initially telling Officer Ryan French that the child did not live there.

A portable breathalyzer showed that Thornton had a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.27 percent. That's more than three times Indiana's legal limit of 0.08 percent to drive.

The girl's mother told officers that Thornton had watched her daughter several times before.

She said Thornton hadn't appeared intoxicated when he arrived to watch the girl.

Officers found no alcoholic beverage containers in the home.

The girl's mother had been at a downtown billiards hall

March 19, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 60 years in friend's beating death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced this afternoon to 60 years in prison for stabbing and fatally beating his childhood best friend with a baseball bat.

Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, was found guilty last month of murder in the Dec. 26, 2008, death of Derek J. Liphard, 26, following a four-day trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

The two friends had gotten into an argument that evening at Knoy's home on North 19th Street.

For more on this story, check back with jconline.com and read Saturday's J&C.

March 19, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Couple face heroin, neglect charges

by SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette couple is accused of keeping an "unlivable" home and exposing a 2-year-old boy to heroin paraphernalia.

John T. Lusebrink, 36, and Erin M. Stillions-Emrich, 25, were charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with possession of a narcotic drug; possession of a syringe; maintaining a common nuisance; and neglect of a dependent.

All counts are felonies.

Lusebrink and Stillions-Emrich are boyfriend-girlfriend, according to Lafayette Police Chief Don Roush.

The charges stem from a report made to the Indiana Department of Child Services.

DCS and the Lafayette Police Department went to Lusebrink and Stillions-Emrich's residence at 3884 Wembley Drive, in the Cambridge Estates apartment complex, on March 15.

Courts documents did not specify if the child was removed from the home or where he was placed.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Officer John Wells described the apartment as "unlivable." Piles of clothing were on the floor, all rooms and on the stairs.

Piles of dirty dishes were in the kitchen sink and on countertops.

In the master bedroom, officers found several small, plastic bags that contained heroin residue and a used syringe with an exposed needle.

Two more syringes, including one containing a brownish liquid, were found in the kitchen. The brownish substance tested positive for heroin.

Lusebrink was being held Thursday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $35,000 surety bond. He also was arrested Monday on an unrelated warrant.

Stillions-Emrich was being held in jail on a $25,000 surety bond

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March 18, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Arson charges filed in apartment blaze

STAFF REPORTS

A teenager is suspected of intentionally starting a fire last month in her Lafayette apartment, causing an estimated $12,000 in damage.

No one was seriously injured.

Felicia J. Woody, 18, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of arson, a Class B felony.

She was expected to turn herself in later this afternoon, according to Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department.

The fire was reported shortly after midnight on Feb. 11 at 2670 Hastings Court, in the Cambridge Estates apartment complex off Indiana 38 East.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Woody initially told investigators that she had fallen asleep with a cigarette.

She later allegedly admitted to trying to commit suicide and setting fire to her mattress and bedding. After realizing other people were in the apartment building, she sought help from a neighbor.

The neighbor told investigators that he estimated flames as being 6 feet high. He and another neighbor were able to put down most of the flames using two fire extinguishers and pans of water.

Woody was treated at Home Hospital for breathing problems.

March 18, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bookkeeper gets probation for embezzling

STAFF REPORTS

A former bookkeeper for a Lafayette drywall and building supply company will not spend time in prison for taking $8,879 from the business.

Instead, Brenda K. Youkey, 52, of Thorntown was sentenced today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to 18 months on probation. She pleaded guilty last November to two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

She repaid her former employer, Rose & Walker Supply, the full amount before criminal charges were filed in August 2006, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Rose & Walker is an Indiana business that has a location on U.S. 52 South in Lafayette. Youkey had not been arrested until June 2009.

Harrington said the victim was satisfied with Youkey's punishment and did not request she serve jail time.

The charges stemmed from money Youkey took from deposits she made in 2005 and 2006. Deposits were a routine part of Youkey's job duties.

Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch also ordered Youkey to complete 18 days of community service.

Under Youkey's plea agreement, additional felony counts of forgery and theft were dropped.

March 18, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Plea nets man 10 years, sex predator label

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to 10 years in prison and one year on house arrest for having sexual contact with a 12-year-old boy.

Justin T. Stetler, 20, pleaded guilty on Jan. 22 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to attempted child molesting, a Class B felony -- avoiding a jury trial scheduled for the following week.

The offense took place on Christmas Eve in 2008, while Stetler was home on leave from the U.S. Army.

"I should have backed away," Stetler said during Wednesday's hearing. "Terrible. There's really no way to describe how bad I felt."

According to Stetler's testimony, he, the 12-year-old and other friends had spent that day playing video games and basketball at the boy's Lafayette apartment.

Later Stetler and the victim were alone.

He said the 12-year-old called him into an upstairs bedroom to show nude photos of another man on a digital camera.

Stetler said they then began play wrestling.

That's when the attempted child molesting occurred. Stetler said he stopped after realizing it was wrong.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman, however, pointed out that Stetler's story on Wednesday was not consistent with prior statements given to a Lafayette police investigator.

Stetler had gone to the Lafayette Police Department on Christmas Day and confessed.

"You got interrupted, and that forced you to quit," Zeman said, adding that Stetler previously admitted to holding the boy down.

She had argued for a 12-year prison sentence.

The boy's father also asked for a harsh sentence so that other children don't become potential victims.

"My son, who is 13 years old, is going to have to deal with this for the rest of his life," the father testified. "That's what I'm afraid of -- that it's going to be someone else's kid."

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify the victims of sexual-based crimes or their family members.

Stetler said he previously was diagnosed as bipolar and suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He no longer takes medication for either illness.

His attorney, Kurtis Fouts, argued that people diagnosed as ADHD are prone to making impulsive decisions.

"The bulk of the state's case was made from my client," Fouts said. "He's sorry for what happened and owned up to it from the beginning."

Judge Randy Williams ordered Stetler to serve three years on supervised probation after his release from prison. Stetler also was deemed a sexually violent predator.

He's required to be on Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry for life.

Fouts told Williams that Stetler plans to appeal.

March 17, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man admits stabbing during fight over TV

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A rural Tippecanoe County man faces four to six years in prison for stabbing another man last July following an argument that began over a missing television.

Jason J. Klinker, 21, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony -- avoiding a jury trial that was scheduled to begin Tuesday.

He also pleaded guilty to unrelated charges of fraud and theft, both Class D felonies, for allegedly using a stolen credit card to purchase items at Tippecanoe Mall, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Klinker will be sentenced April 16 by Judge Randy Williams.

The stabbing took place on July 7 outside an apartment on Briarwood Court, off Indiana 38 East. The victim,

Adam Jones, 25, was treated at Home Hospital for a stab wound to his chest.

Jones also had cuts on his fingers, apparently from trying to deflect the blow.

According to court documents, Klinker had an arrangement with an acquaintance, Joshua Mitchell, in which they would trade a television back and forth between them.

Mitchell had purchased a new television on July 7. But after returning home from playing golf with Jones, he discovered the new TV was missing.

The two men then went to the Briarwood Court apartment, where Klinker stayed with his girlfriend. Mitchell told sheriff's investigators he believed Klinker stole the TV.

All three were arguing when Klinker allegedly grabbed a knife from kitchen.

Jones was stabbed after going outside.

March 10, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Judge just doesn't buy story in WL shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

J. Calderon's explanation of what took place on Aug. 22, 2009, the night his best friend was fatally shot during an alcohol-fueled prank in West Lafayette, just didn't make sense to Judge Les Meade.

Did Calderon or his then-roommate, Cory S. Lynch, come up with the idea to each point handguns at 21-year-old Landon Siela, Meade questioned during Calderon's sentencing hearing Tuesday morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

How much alcohol did the three friends consume that day? And why didn't Calderon, the owner of a Kimber .45-caliber handgun fired by Lynch, remind his roommate that it was loaded?

Those were among the concerns that prompted Meade to reject Calderon's plea agreement to pointing a firearm, a Class A misdemeanor. The judge said he believed the criminal charges, and thus the plea, were too lenient.

"He loaded the gun. He kept it loaded in his nightstand," Meade said of Calderon, 22. "He knew full well it was loaded. ... Where did you hold your gun to Landon?"

"To his chest," Calderon, of Fort Wayne, replied.

The shooting took place at Calderon and Lynch's apartment at 204 Wiggins St. in West Lafayette, two days before classes began for Purdue University's fall semester.

Calderon and Lynch previously attended Purdue.

During Tuesday's hearing, Meade asked Calderon to read aloud his handwritten statement previously filed in Superior Court 5, that detailed what prompted the shooting.

Siela, a student at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and Calderon's best friend, was visiting for Boiler Gold Rush, Calderon said. Boiler Gold Rush is Purdue's annual, incoming-student orientation.

The three friends had spent Aug. 22 drinking beer, taking shots of alcohol and playing with a neighbor's airsoft gun — a gun that shoots plastic pellets at relatively low velocity.

Calderon said a pistol belonging to Siela was sitting atop a bedroom dresser and that it originally was Lynch's idea to prank Siela. Further pressed by Meade, Calderon then admitted it was his idea to use real handguns.

He grabbed Siela's handgun. Lynch then retrieved Calderon's, which Calderon kept loaded in their apartment for protection.

"Cory didn't know that much about firearms," Calderon said, reading from his statement. "Unfortunately, Cory pulled the trigger on his firearm, unlike me."

A bullet struck Siela in the throat, killing him.

"This is the first time you told any investigator, or openly, that it was your idea, isn't it?" Meade said. "You know the gun Mr. Lynch picked up was loaded because it was your gun?"

Calderon nodded in response.

He told Meade that Siela brought his firearm because they planned to visit a shooting range that weekend — one near Chauncey Hill Mall in West Lafayette that Calderon said he found "from Google."

Meade replied that he knew of no shooting ranges near there.

Under Calderon's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, an additional charge of false informing, a Class A misdemeanor, would have been dropped if Meade had accepted the plea agreement.

The judge told Deputy Prosecutor Greg Loyd that Calderon's charged offenses didn't seem to match what took place, in his eyes.

"It's the same level as shoplifting, and your office thinks that's the appropriate disposition?" Meade said.

Loyd responded that criminal recklessness would not have fit because Calderon had cleared Siela's handgun beforehand.

The court on Tuesday also heard testimony from Siela's father, Ron Siela of Fort Wayne. He said his family was torn on making a sentencing recommendation for Calderon.

Last week, during Lynch's sentencing hearing in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, the family asked Judge Don Daniel for leniency. Lynch, 23, received two years on community corrections and one year on supervised probation for reckless homicide, a Class C felony.

"We felt that Cory was the unfortunate one ... that Cory was getting the harder end of the deal," a tearful Siela

told Meade. “No matter what, Will was the leader of the pack. He always kept Landon in check.

“You run the realm you’re in, where there’s always a leader and always a follower. Landon could be both when he wanted to be. But Landon didn’t stand a chance in that house.”

Ron Siela said he did not believe his son would want Calderon to be sentenced to jail time. But he said house arrest did not seem appropriate, either.

When asked by Meade to describe his son, Ron Siela told the judge how angry he was when Landon Siela came home with his first tattoo. Ron Siela then drew on his own arms with a black, felt-tip marker.

He said Landon Siela would easily be his choice, if asked who he wanted to be stranded with on a deserted island.

“If I thought that throwing Cory and Will under the bus would bring back my son, I would not hesitate,” Ron Siela said. “Landon, he would treasure his friendships more than anything.

“He had an extraordinary heart.”

March 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former city firefighter avoids arson trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette firefighter will not stand trial this month on accusations that he intentionally started a blaze that severely damaged his Battle Ground home 15 months ago.

That's because all criminal charges against Eric W. Tendam, 41, of West Lafayette were dismissed Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Tendam had been charged with two counts of arson, one a Class B felony and the other a Class C felony; and misdemeanor counts of obstructing or interfering with a firefighter, criminal mischief and possession of marijuana.

His jury trial was scheduled to begin March 23 before Judge Thomas Busch. Tendam's attorney, Dan Moore, planned to present an insanity defense.

"We have insufficient evidence to further prosecute at this time," Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Monday.

More specifically, that lack of evidence dealt with whether the Oct. 17, 2008, fire was indeed set intentionally, Moore said.

"It was ultimately the prosecutor's decision, but I believe it was a combination of there being difficulty proving

issues with respect to the arson," Moore said. "Those issues were further complicated by the insanity defense."

According to court documents, Tendam was the only person home when the Tippecanoe Township Volunteer Fire Department was called to battle a blaze at 834 E. County Road 725 North on Oct. 17.

Flames were visible from the front of the house. Material also was burning in a nearby fenced area outside and in the back of a pickup truck in the driveway.

Authorities suspected the fire was intentional based on burn patterns that appeared consistent with burn patterns caused by flammable liquids.

Tendam was further accused of ripping a fire hose from a firefighter's hands and throwing another firefighter's helmet into the burning, two-story house.

He was fired from the Lafayette Fire Department in February 2009, based partly on those allegations.

Tendam had been a city firefighter for 13 years.

Moore said the dismissed charges likely will not reverse Tendam's termination.

"We filed the insanity defense, and he was evaluated by doctors," Moore said. "As far as his current mental state, he seems to be healthy and adjusted well, given the trauma.

"He's happy to have this behind him and move forward."

According to documents filed in Superior Court 2, a Wabash Valley Hospital psychiatrist who evaluated Tendam determined that he had been "operating under delusional beliefs."

Harrington said charges could be filed at a later date because the case was dismissed without prejudice

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March 6, 2010: WLFI TV

Welch to be jailed up to 14 years
Nov 2008 DUI crash killed Harrison HS student

Updated: Saturday, 06 Mar 2010, 7:21 PM EST
Published : Friday, 05 Mar 2010, 6:53 PM EST

- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Joseph Welch, 31, to 17 years in prison Friday. Welsh pleaded guilty to operating a vehicle while intoxicated resulting in death.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington read a letter to the courtroom from 16-year-old Katherine Baker's father, describing her as "fearless."

Baker's brother Thomas echoed his father's praises, when he took the stand.

"She could have been a great addition to society," Thomas Baker said. "She could have helped so many people, and we were all robbed of a fantastic person."

Baker, 19, spoke to a packed courtroom, telling the story of his sister Kate, who was killed in November 2008 when her car was hit by Joseph Welch's.

According to Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington, Welch's blood alcohol content was three times the legal limit.

"This person had two prior times he's been in front of a court, one for alcohol, which is an OWI [operating while intoxicated], one for burglary, and I'm positive that he told his judges he learned his lesson, he was remorseful and he would do better in the future, so I don't think he deserved a third chance to be out in public," Harrington said.

Judge Busch suspended two years of Welch's sentence, and Welch will get more than one year credit for time already served. When he's released, his license will be suspended for another 5 years.

Thomas Baker said the sentence was hardly a consolation.

"I think that it's just for the most part," he said. "But I don't think that any sentencing can make up for what we lost."

March 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

15 years for fatal OWI
Man asks forgiveness of Harrison girl's family

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Joseph L. Welch was no doubt intoxicated on Nov. 23, 2008, the night he went through two red traffic lights and caused a two-vehicle crash that killed a Harrison High School student.

His receipt that night at Cox's Pub in Lafayette included seven Irish car bombs -- typically composed of Guinness, a shot of whiskey and Irish cream; seven shots of Rumple Minze peppermint schnapps; and two shots of Crown Royal whiskey, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

During Welch's sentencing hearing Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, Harrington recommended that Welch receive 15 years in prison for causing the death of Katherine Ann "Kate" Baker, 16.

Judge Thomas Busch agreed.

"You certainly had a horrible childhood," Busch said.

"But having been a victim does not excuse making someone else a victim."

Welch's mother and father were both alcoholics, according to his maternal aunt, Sharon Kotch, who flew in from Texas to testify Friday in support of Welch.

After they died, Welch lived with his maternal grandfather, who also drank heavily.

"It wasn't a good life for him at all," Kotch said.

Welch, 31, pleaded guilty on Nov. 20, 2009, to operating a vehicle with a blood-alcohol content of 0.15 percent or more causing death, a Class B felony.

According to court documents, a blood test taken at St. Elizabeth Central hospital showed that Welch had a blood-alcohol content of 0.21 percent afterward.

He faced from six to 20 years incarceration.

The fatal wreck occurred after Welch ran two red traffic lights on U.S. 52, one at Win Hentschel Boulevard and another at Morehouse Road, striking the driver's side of Baker's vehicle at the latter intersection.

Welch, who originally is from Texas, was living in West Lafayette and working on a wind energy farm in Benton County at the time.

A crash data recorder from Welch's Dodge Nitro showed that Welch was going 72 mph when the sport utility vehicle struck Baker's vehicle, Deputy Aaron Gilman of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office said Friday.

The posted speed limit on U.S. 52 near Morehouse is 50 mph.

Baker was turning left onto U.S. 52 from Morehouse Road, driving 19 mph, when the vehicles collided, said Gilman, a member of the Lafayette Metro Fatal Alcohol Crash Team.

During Friday's hearing, Welch turned and apologized to the Baker family.

"Certainly Kate didn't deserve what happened to her," he said. "I hope and pray that one day, in time, you can find it in your hearts to forgive me.

"I know it won't be easy because I haven't forgiven myself."

That evening, shortly before midnight, Kate Baker was headed to Wabash Landing 9 movie theater to pick up her brother from work. When she didn't show, the brother, Thomas Baker, asked a friend for a ride home.

They came upon the fatal wreck soon after emergency responders arrived.

"I was joking around with my friend, saying my sister was probably in a ditch somewhere," Thomas Baker, 19, testified Friday. "My stomach just dropped because I realized that might be true.

" ... Logically I know that I didn't bear any responsibility, but I do suffer from severe guilt trips. If I took better care of my car, she wouldn't have had to come get me."

Thomas Baker told Busch that the maximum punishment for Welch was not enough.

"I would like everyone to know how much the world is hurting now that Kate is gone," he said. "Kate was destined to do great things."

The teenager, who sang in Harrison's choir, considered studying medicine, according to her father, John Baker of West Lafayette. He wrote a letter read in court Friday by Harrington, which described his daughter as fearless and compassionate.

Afterward, John Baker said he supported the prosecutor's arguments and recommendations.

"No matter the length of (Welch's) sentence, nothing will bring Kate back," John Baker said.

Busch also sentenced Welch to two years on supervised probation. His driver's license also will be suspended for five years.

March 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

No prison time for fatal WL prank

By SOPHIA VORAVONG • svoravong@jconline.com • March 6, 2010

After fatally shooting his friend during an alcohol-fueled prank last August in West Lafayette, Cory S. Lynch voluntarily sought counseling for alcohol-related issues.

The former Purdue University student vowed Friday morning in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to "live a life of God" from now on. Lynch, 23, has decided to never drink alcohol again, according to his Indianapolis-based attorney, James Bell.

They were among several mitigating factors cited by Judge Don Daniel, who sentenced Lynch on Friday to two years on community corrections -- some combination of work release, house arrest and day reporting -- and one year on supervised probation.

That means Lynch, who pleaded guilty in January to reckless homicide, a Class C felony, won't spend a day in prison for killing 21-year-old Landon Siela.

"I never thought I would see a case where somebody dies and somebody doesn't go to prison," Daniel told Lynch. "I don't believe putting you in prison would accomplish anything for anybody."

The shooting took place on Aug. 22, 2009, at 204 Wiggins St. in West Lafayette, where Lynch had been living with Siela's longtime friend, William Calderon.

It was two days before classes began for Purdue's fall semester.

Lynch, of Carmel, had faced between two and eight years of incarceration.

According to court documents and information presented during prior hearings, the three friends had spent much of Aug. 22 drinking beer and hard liquor.

They also were playing with an airsoft gun, which shoots rubber pellets at relatively low velocity. Lynch and Calderon then decided to pull a prank on Siela by using real firearms.

The handgun Lynch fired belonged to Calderon. Lynch had not realized the firearm was loaded. He pulled the trigger, and a bullet struck Siela in the throat.

"There's no way I can ever forgive myself for what I've done," Lynch said in court Friday. "I can see and feel the heartbreak when talking to Landon's family. ... I know it's not enough to say I'm sorry.

"But I'm sorry for what I did and how I acted."

Lynch told Daniel he wanted to share his story with junior high students. He has already contacted his church to set up a meeting with youth groups.

"Landon was a friend of mine, and every day I live with that," Lynch said.

The sentence was in line with recommendations made by Siela's parents, Ron and Janet Siela of Fort Wayne, and other family members. They asked for the minimum punishment under Indiana law.

Ron Siela, who testified Friday morning, said that is what his son would have wanted.

"Landon was always protective of his friends, no matter what," Ron Siela said through tears. "He might go down the wrong path with them, but he would always stand by them.

"... We're doing what Landon would have done."

Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss and Tippecanoe County's probation department each recommended that Lynch be sentenced to two years in prison and two years on supervised probation.

Biss noted that Lynch had two prior alcohol-related arrests -- one of them as a juvenile. When he shot Landon Siela, Lynch was already free on bond for an unrelated charge of operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

The drunken driving arrest occurred on June 21, 2009, in Hamilton County.

"The state's recommendation does not always match the family's recommendation," Biss noted. "But it's necessary for the state to protect the safety of this community."

Daniel considered Lynch's prior arrests as aggravators, but he noted that neither carried significant weight. The judge further said the shooting "happened as a result of circumstances unlikely to occur again."

Lynch's attorney, the deputy prosecutor and Daniel all commented that it was a unique case.

"The judge listened to the Siela family and the Lynches and arrived at a fair result," Bell said.

Lynch also must complete 288 hours of community service.

March 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury finds home invasion suspect guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces a number of years in prison after being convicted of participating in a drug-related, attempted robbery at a north end apartment.

Tradell S. Marzette, 23, was found guilty today of six, Class B felonies - conspiracy to commit armed robbery, attempted armed robbery and four counts of criminal confinement - in connection with the April 18, 2009, home invasion.

Throughout the three-day trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, he denied any involvement.

"Thank y'all. I've got two kids," Marzette shouted to jurors as they were leaving the courtroom. "Thank y'all for something I didn't do."

He will be sentenced March 31 by Judge Don Daniel. A Class B felony is punishable by six to 20 years incarceration for each count.

Marzette was one of several people charged in connection with drug-related, residential armed robberies last March, April and May in Tippecanoe County.

Their targets were alleged marijuana dealers.

All co-defendants have since pleaded guilty and received sentences ranging from eight years to 18 years in prison. Only Marzette went before a jury.

The Circuit Court jury consisted of 11 women and one man, all of whom were white. Deliberations, which began about 12:30 p.m. Thursday, lasted five hours.

Deputy prosecutors Jason Biss and Donna Frank presented the case for the state. Marzette was represented by Deputy Public Defender Kirk Freeman.

March 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man get 6 years for sex with girl, 13

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced this afternoon to six years in the Indiana Department of Correction for having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl.

Jose Refugio Puentes-Robledo, 26, will then be deported from the United States.

Puentes-Robledo pleaded guilty in December in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to an amended count of child molesting, a Class B felony.

He apologized during today's sentencing hearing before Judge Thomas Busch. About 20 family members and friends attended in support.

"I would like to say I'm very sorry to my family and to the family of the victim ... and to the laws of this state," Puentes-Robledo said through a Spanish-language interpreter.

He was arrested and charged in March 2009, shortly after the 13-year-old's parents reported her as a runaway. The two were acquaintances.

Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Puentes-Robledo met the girl one morning at her bus stop. He somehow convinced her to skip school.

The girl's parents contacted the Lafayette Police Department that day when she didn't return home.
"They were worried sick," Zeman told Busch.

Puentes-Robledo's Indianapolis-based attorney, Luther Garcia, noted that, under Indiana law, the girl was too young to give consent. But he said no force was involved.

Puentes-Robledo originally had been charged with child molesting as a Class A felony, which carries a sentencing range of 20 to 50 years incarceration.

March 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 55 years for fatal neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Thomas A. Dexter spoke publicly for the first time Wednesday about fatally injuring his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter, explaining that he loved Kimberly "Kimmy" Snow like family.

In a quiet and shaky voice, Dexter, 32, asserted that Kimmy's death — caused when she fell headfirst into a bathtub, after Dexter playfully tossed the toddler in the air — was accidental.

He was found guilty on Jan. 22 of neglect of a dependent causing death, a Class A felony, following three days of testimony in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

"I just want to say, this whole thing, I didn't do it to hurt nobody," Dexter told Judge Thomas Busch. "I loved Kimmy very much. ... I think about what happened every day. I have nightmares about it every night."

Busch sentenced Dexter on Wednesday to 55 years in prison and five years on supervised probation. That included a non-suspendable 30-year sentence because Dexter was found guilty of being a habitual offender.

Dexter did not testify during the trial.

Kimmy Snow died at Indianapolis' Riley Hospital for Children on May 5, 2009, of an intracranial hemorrhage due to blunt force trauma to her head.

According to testimony and evidence presented during Dexter's trial, Dexter was Kimmy's primary caregiver on April 30, 2009, the first day she was hospitalized.

At the time, they were living at 3032 Phipps Court in the Country View Estates apartment complex on Lafayette's south end.

When Dexter called 911 that morning, he told emergency responders that he found Kimmy partially submerged in bathwater. By evening, he gave investigators a different story — claiming that he tried flipping Kimmy in the air, as he's done before, shortly after her bath.

But this time, he was not able to catch her. Dexter said Kimmy hit her back on the side of the bathtub. Her head then struck the bottom of the tub.

Before handing down Dexter's sentence, Judge Busch noted some people are still skeptical of Dexter's story. He also noted that little explanation was given whether Kimmy was being punished that morning for urinating on herself.

The girl had peed her pants on April 30, 2009, shortly after getting herself dressed, Dexter told investigators. He described throwing Kimmy as part of a "circus act."

"His explanation of cheering her up isn't persuasive to me," Busch said.

About 20 people attended Wednesday's sentencing hearing, among them Dexter's parents; Kimmy's mother, Amber Haper; detectives with the Lafayette Police Department; and caseworkers with the Tippecanoe County branch of the Indiana Department of Child Services.

Haper told Busch that Dexter should be punished but said she also believed that Kimmy's death was accidental. She asked Busch to hand down the minimum sentence, 50 years.

"Tom has things he needs to work on mentally," Haper said. "He loved my kids. I wouldn't have been with him if I had any doubt he was hurting them."

Haper also added that she was concerned about Kimmy's older sister, who was 6 years old when Kimmy died. "Her being so young, she doesn't really understand what happened," Haper said. "She's going to live with this for the rest of her life."

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Laura Zeman recommended that Dexter be sentenced to 70 years in prison. He had faced up to 80 years incarceration.

Sam Warren, a DCS supervisor, testified on the state's behalf Wednesday. He interviewed the 6-year-old on May 1, 2009, after Kimmy was hospitalized.

"She said (Dexter) would spank or smack them on the mouth or bottom ... only when mom was gone," Warren said. "If Kimmy pees herself, he made her sit on the toilet and stare at the wall."
That information was not permitted during Dexter's trial.

March 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed against 2 in drug investigation

By JUSTIN L. MAC; jmack@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against two Lafayette residents suspected of dealing and possessing narcotics.

The charges against Maurice A. Waller, 25, and Roteshia W. McClain, 24, stem from a two-month drug investigation conducted by the West Lafayette Police Department. Both suspects were charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Waller was charged with conspiracy to deal a controlled substance, four counts of dealing a controlled substance, four counts of possession of a controlled substance, possession of cocaine, dealing marijuana, possession of marijuana, maintaining a common nuisance and neglect of a dependent.

McClain was charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana, maintaining a common nuisance and neglect of a dependent.

March 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges allege mom left kids home alone

-- Sophia Voravong; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman is accused of leaving her two children, ages 5 and 8, home alone Friday night while going on a date.

Evelyn L. Murphy, 26, was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

She was being held Tuesday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $5,000 surety bond.

Murphy's children were placed in foster care, said Sgt. Scott McCoy, a detective with the Lafayette Police Department.

Officers were called to Murphy's home at 3772 Amherst Drive about 8:10 p.m. Friday after a former roommate, Amanda Gentry, contacted police.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Gentry told officers she was concerned because the 8-year-old has emotional and mental health issues -- among them Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and bipolar disorder -- and cannot care for himself, let alone a younger sibling.

Murphy returned home after she was contacted via cell phone by officers. She told them Gentry was supposed to baby-sit.

The older boy told a caseworker with the Indiana Department of Child Services that Murphy went to Tangos, a Lafayette bar, on Friday night.

The same caseworker previously investigated Murphy in June 2009 after her two children were found wandering alone at Columbian Park in Lafayette for 20 to 30 minutes.

Murphy was warned about lack of supervision and had to sign a safety plan to ensure her children were properly supervised at all times.

Similar calls against Murphy were made in April 2007, May 2007 and September 2008.

Murphy was appointed a public defender on Tuesday afternoon.

March 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 55 year sentence in death of 3-year-old

STAFF REPORTS

Lafayette man earlier convicted of causing severe head injuries that killed his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter will spend 55 years in prison.

Thomas A. Dexter, 31, was sentenced to 55 years in prison this afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. He will also serve five years of supervised probation.

He was convicted in January of neglect of a dependent causing death in the May 5, 2009 death of Kimberly "Kimmy" Snow.

For updates, check back with jconline.com

March 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea comes after string of robberies of same store

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A rural West Lafayette woman faces four to 16 years in prison for holding up the same Lafayette convenience store three times.

Jacqueline S. Aper, 50, pleaded guilty this afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to three counts of robbery, a Class C felony.

Aper told Judge Randy Williams that she was under the influence of cocaine when she held up Village Pantry at 1920 Main St. on Oct. 19 and Nov. 8, 2008, and Jan. 29, 2009.

In each instance, Aper said she kept her hand in her pocket - implying she was armed. An actual weapon was never displayed. Aper got away with an undisclosed amount of cash.

She was arrested in February 2009, just days after the Lafayette Police Department released images from surveillance cameras and audio of the robberies.

Under Aper's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, additional charges of robbery and theft against her could be dropped.

Aper originally had been charged in connection to five robberies at the Main Street Village Pantry between October 2008 and January 2009.

Investigators suspected she used the money to buy crack cocaine.

Aper will be sentenced by Williams on April 26.

Under her plea agreement, the sentences for two of the offenses can be served concurrently, or at the same time. That will run consecutively to the third charge.

In Indiana, a Class C felony is punishable by two to eight years incarceration for each offense.

Aper said today that she could not remember threatening at least one of the Village Pantry clerks, along with other details, because she was under the influence of cocaine.

March 3, 2010: WLFI TV

Lafayette woman charged with neglect
Court docs say she left sons at home, went on date

Updated: Wednesday, 03 Mar 2010, 11:19 AM EST
Published : Tuesday, 02 Mar 2010, 6:39 PM EST

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman faces charges of neglect of a dependent, after allegedly leaving her two young children home alone while she went on a date.

According to court documents, Evelyn Lee Murphy told police she assumed her former roommate would go to her house last Friday to watch her five-year-old and eight-year-old sons.

The roommate called the police because she was concerned about the older boy, who she said has ADHD and bipolar disorder, the document said.

The boys were taken into custody by Child Protective Services. According to the document, the children told a CPS representative their mother has left them home alone before, and there was no telephone available to call for help in an emergency.

March 3, 2010: WLFI TV

Dexter sentenced for toddler's death

Updated: Wednesday, 03 Mar 2010, 5:06 PM EST
Published : Wednesday, 03 Mar 2010, 5:06 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 60 years in prison for the death of his girlfriend's daughter.

Only 55 years will be served because the judge suspended five years.

32-year-old Thomas Dexter was convicted in January of neglect of a dependent causing death.

Dexter told police he was watching three-year-old Kimberly Snow.

He said he playfully tossed her in the bathtub, but accidently dropped her causing her to hit her head and back.

He said he then picked her up and accidently struck her head on the door frame.

The child died five days later.

February 27, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man pleads to neglect, battery

Lafayette man admitted Friday to endangering his former girlfriend's 5-year-old daughter and hurting the girl's mother during an argument in August 2009.

Brian K. Stewart, 42, entered a guilty plea to charges of neglect of a dependent, a class D felony, and domestic

battery, a class A misdemeanor, in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

He faces between six months and four years in jail for the crimes.

According to court documents, Stewart and his girlfriend, Virginia M. Delph, 31, were arguing on Aug. 8 while Delph was combing her daughter's hair. Stewart slapped Delph's hand, causing the plastic comb to dig into the girl's head and break.

The couple failed to seek medical attention or call police about the girl's injury. Police were notified when Delph called a neighbor, who in turn called the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

Delph was sentenced earlier this month to 18 months supervised probation on charges of neglect of a dependent.

Stewart is scheduled to be sentenced March 26.

February 26, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Stepdad gets 14 years for infant's abuse

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Chloe Schulz will turn 1 year old on March 8, but the Lafayette girl is only now showing signs of learning to crawl, according to her maternal grandmother, Sally Clark.

Since last June, Chloe has undergone surgery five times. Doctors at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis determined that she has permanent brain damage from being violently shaken by her stepfather, Matthew T. Schulz.

Schulz, 21, was sentenced today to 14 years in prison for causing Chloe's injuries. He pleaded guilty but mentally ill to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

Though Schulz tearfully apologized, Chloe's mother, Valerie Schulz, and her grandmother testified that it was not enough.

"Chloe was fighting for her life at Riley. She had a 30 percent chance of living," Clark said. "When we were talking to one of the doctors ... Matt was making jokes about Chloe.

"He did nothing and didn't say anything about what happened to help doctors save her life."

According to court documents, Chloe was 14 weeks old when she was flown from St. Elizabeth Central to Riley on June 19, 2009. Her eyes were crossed, and her breathing was raspy.

Matthew Schulz used to watch Chloe while her mother was working.

He testified today to shaking Chloe at least five times because he would get frustrated and angry when she cried. Schulz also admitted that he called the girl demeaning names because he did not like Chloe's biological father.

That was combined with heavy alcohol and substance abuse.

"From her being so young and me having no clue of why she was crying and for how long — I would get frustrated rather than looking into the problem," Schulz said.

"I'd be mean toward her and call her names. I'd face her away from me and shake her. ... I didn't know the severity of what I did."

Schulz told Judge Randy Williams that he suffered from depression and attention deficit disorder as a youth. He stopped taking medication in his teens.

Williams also ordered that Schulz serve two years on supervised probation after he's released from the Indiana Department of Correction.

His 14-year prison sentence was the amount recommended by Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Osmon.

"What the family had to see Chloe go through, I can't imagine as a father of a daughter," Osmon said. "He did something that is outrageous."

February 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury finds couple guilty of neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Hailee Rogers was 3 weeks old when she was flown from Home Hospital's emergency room to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis on June 5, 2008.

The Lafayette girl suffered a serious head injury that permanently damaged part of her brain, Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman argued

But Hailee, now 21 months old, appeared healthy and well-adjusted Thursday morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. Her parents, Careena N. Kelly, 22, and Ryan P. Rogers, 28, stood trial this week, accused of causing Hailee's injury.

"She was able to point out her nose ... her dad's chin, her mom's lips," the couple's attorney, Charles Deible, said during closing arguments. "She's able to talk, walk.

" ... I submit to you, what caused her injury was an accident. It was not done knowingly or intentionally."

However, a jury of six women and six men disagreed.

On Thursday afternoon, Kelly and Rogers were each found guilty of neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony, in connection with Hailee's injuries.

That offense is punishable by six to 20 years in prison.

Jurors had deliberated for more than five hours.

Kelly sobbed when Judge Thomas Busch read the verdicts aloud. The Lafayette couple will be sentenced April 20.

"Careena is especially not taking it well," Deible, their attorney, said afterward.

A key issue for jurors was what happened the night of June 5, 2008, when Kelly and Rogers rushed Hailee to Home Hospital because she was unresponsive.

According to testimony during the three-day trial, the couple told investigators Rogers was holding Hailee when she kicked against his chest and fell head-first.

Hailee's head then struck a nearby vacuum cleaner, the father testified.

But doctors at Riley determined that Hailee's injury was non-accidental, abusive head trauma, caused by a rapid

acceleration-deceleration motion — such as being shaken.

“He had to come up with something to try and blame and distract from himself,” Zeman said during closing arguments. “The type of brain injury you saw with Hailee, you simply do not get with a short fall.”

Deible requested that a half-day be allotted for Kelly and Rogers’ sentencing hearing. He plans to have caseworkers with the Department of Child Services and Hailee’s Court Appointed Special Advocate testify on their behalf.

Hailee had been deemed a Child in Need of Services, but Kelly and Rogers regained custody of their daughter last August, Deible said afterward.

“They are good parents,” he said. “Everyone was in favor of returning custody to them.”

The CHINS proceeding, however, remains open.

Deible said Magistrate Faith Graham wanted to see the outcome of the criminal proceeding.

February 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen wedding crasher suspected of firing shot

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Two juveniles from Lafayette were being held in secure detention Wednesday following an early Sunday incident during which one gunshot was fired at a wedding reception.

No one was injured.

The juveniles are 14 and 15 years old. Investigators are still looking for a third suspect, a 16-year-old Lafayette boy, whom they suspect pulled the trigger.

Their names have not been released.

Tippecanoe County Sheriff Tracy Brown said it happened about 1:30 a.m. Sunday at the Conservation Club of Tippecanoe County, 2799 Conservation Club Road, off Indiana 25 North.

He described the three teenagers as "uninvited guests." Brown did not have information Wednesday on whether they knew anyone at the wedding reception.

For unclear reasons, they reportedly got into a physical fight with some of the wedding guests, Brown said Wednesday. The teenagers then left, only to return with a firearm.

One round was fired into the ceiling, according to sheriff's Maj. Charlie Williams.

He said all the suspects had fled by the time deputies arrived. But investigators were able to identify all three allegedly involved.

The incident remains under investigation.

"We are actively investigating the possibility that at least one of them is involved in a gang," Brown said.

Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Hagen said the 14-year-old and 15-year-old were placed in secure detention after a hearing Tuesday before juvenile court Judge Loretta Rush.

Hagen said he is not planning to file any requests for them to be waived to adult court. He said a decision on the

16-year-old will be made after that teen is arrested

February 25, 2010: WLFI TV

Four men charged for string of crimes
Alleged thefts and burglaries date back to Dec. 09

Updated: Thursday, 25 Feb 2010, 1:53 PM EST
Published : Thursday, 25 Feb 2010, 11:59 AM EST

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Four men from Tippecanoe County are facing charges of burglary and theft for a string of crimes over the past three months.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed charges Wednesday against Trevor Hickey, Justin Zackary Brown, Brice Romack, and Ethan Miller.

According to court documents, they were involved in a series of thefts dating back to December.

According to the court documents, the men admitted to stealing a variety of items, including TVs, X-box systems, tires, rims, and gasoline.

February 24, 2010: WLFI TV

Presentation sheds light on gangs
Over 30 gangs in Tippecanoe County

Updated: Wednesday, 24 Feb 2010, 10:32 AM EST
Published : Wednesday, 24 Feb 2010, 12:14 AM EST

- Tiffanie Dismore

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A presentation on gangs across the country and in Tippecanoe County sheds light on what the community can do to counteract gang activity.

Nationally recognized gang specialist Robert Walker gave over an hour and a half long presentation on signs of gang activity to over 240 people Tuesday night at the Faith Community Center in Lafayette. Gang Investigator Kathryn Redd said raising awareness will help educate the community on gangs.

"No one agency, no one person can make a difference. It has to be everybody working together and everybody on the same page," she said.

Pictures of gang hand signs, tattoos and clothing were some of the examples on how to identify someone involved with gangs. Walker said the first sign of gang activity is graffiti in a community. Some warning signs are not as easy to detect. Other indicators could include the following:

- Admits to "hanging out" with kids in gangs
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo
- Has an unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, movies or websites
- Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on school books, clothes, walls or tattoos
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries
- Has unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry
- Carries a weapon
- Has been in trouble with the police

During his presentation, Walker said people may join gangs for a number of reasons like excitement, peer pressure, fear, attention, money, drugs, sex, a sense of belonging, safety and family tradition. He said one of the most popular places for gangs to recruit people are in schools. He said other places gangs may try to recruit new members include churches, teen night clubs, athletic events and the internet.

Becky Barnes attended the presentation because she works with children and wanted to know the warning signs and how she can help. She couldn't believe what she learned.
"To me Lafayette is a small, safe town. I don't see any signs of this anywhere. To hear that we have this much in our community, I was shocked," Barnes said.

During the presentation, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said there are over 30 gangs in Tippecanoe County. Pictures were shown of graffiti in Tippecanoe County. One example was graffiti threatening the Lafayette Police Department. Another picture showed a bench at a local middle school in Tippecanoe County with gang signs and graffiti drawn on it. Redd said gang activities in Tippecanoe County include drive-by shootings, beatings and drug activity.

"We estimate that about 90% of the drug activity that occurs in the county is due to gangs. Illegal gangs are controlling it and they most definitely are fighting over it," Redd said.

"The community needs to be aware," Barnes said. "They need to know signs of it. Like they said, we shouldn't hide it. It can't be a secret."

Click on the links below for websites Walker suggested for parents, teachers, students and concerned citizens to visit for more information on gangs.
Gangs Or Us
Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office
Teachers Against Gangs
Students Against Gangs

February 24, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Seminar trains, informs about local gang presence

By JUSTIN L. MACK; jmack@jconline.com

Lafayette's Teri Ulrich said she is noticing several negative changes throughout the city.

"I hear more stuff about drive-bys and assaults all the time," said Ulrich, who has lived in different parts of Lafayette over the past eight years. "I see graffiti, and I know it's not my neighbors doing it.
"It's got to be gangs. We can't deny it anymore."

Ulrich and more than 200 other residents attended a free gang identification seminar Tuesday night at Faith Community Center.

The seminar, organized by the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office, featured a presentation by Robert C. Walker, a former agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and a nationally recognized gang specialist.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the purpose of the event was not only to spread the word that gangs have a local presence but to provide training that will help individuals deter gang activity.

"Right now we have a lot of information, but we are having a hard time pulling it together," he said. "Our local law enforcement is stretched so thin. Now is the time to get involved."

Walker's presentation, entitled "Gangs or Us," discussed the history of gangs, which gangs have the strongest local presence and more.

Walker also urged Tippecanoe County residents to take the issue seriously, stating that denial is one of the biggest contributing factors to gang activity.

"Gangs want you to deny their existence," he said. "We have to admit that they are here. This isn't Los Angeles, this isn't Chicago, but there is still a problem."

During his presentation, Walker showed attendees hundreds of examples of gang tattoos, hand signals, graffiti, colors and other identifying marks.

Warning signs for parents and teachers were also provided so people can learn how to stop gang activity before it begins.

He also shared that one major obstacle looming over the gang problem is the fact that it is not against the law for an individual to join.

"Any gang member could walk into a police station and introduce themselves," he said. "Plus, when you arrest one, two more come to take his place. It's almost impossible to arrest the gang problem."
Walker said being proactive is the best way to keep gangs at bay.

"We have to ask who's going to be in control? Gangs or us?" he said.

Lafayette's Jack Kendall said he has been working for a rental company in the area for about a year and a half, and he came to the seminar to learn how to identify gang activity near his property.
"It was good," he said. "I learned a lot of things that I never heard or saw before."

Hanna Community Center Executive Director Dewayne Moffitt attended the event and said it will take the entire community to improve things on the streets.
"Communication is going to be the key. If you see something, tell someone," he said. "We can't be scared, ashamed or timid to say what is really going on."

February 22, 2010: WLFI TV

Gang awareness meeting for community
Meeting at Faith Community Center Tuesday

Updated: Monday, 22 Feb 2010, 4:29 PM EST
Published : Monday, 22 Feb 2010, 4:29 PM EST

- Julie Krizen

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - There are about 35 different gangs in Tippecanoe County, according to the county prosecutor.

That's why Prosecutor Pat Harrington wants community members to attend a forum on gang activity Tuesday. Harrington said if the community doesn't get involved in the fight against gangs, the fight will become even tougher.

Nationally recognized gang expert Robert Walker will be the guest speaker.
He said it's important for people to come to the meeting to learn about the signs of gang activity.

"I'm going to talk about how we identify gangs through the graffiti, tattoos, the clothing that they wear. We will also discuss the problem of children joining gangs. Why do they joins gangs? Who joins gangs? What crimes do this children and even adults committ," said Walker.

Harrington said everyone has a civic duty to make the community safe.

"We encourage everyone in the community to attend. We know there are going to be teachers, we're going to have some of our community leaders here, but we want the public here. We want mom and dad here. We want them to come out and learn so they're aware of what's going on in the streets, in the schools, and in the community," said Harrington.

The Gang Awareness and Identification Training will be on Tuesday February 23rd from 7:00p.m. to 9:00p.m.

It will be at the Faith Community Center in the multipurpose room. That's located at 5526 State Road 26 East in Lafayette.

February 17, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Second man pleads guilty in pot operation

-- Sophia Voravong; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette man faces between six months and three years incarceration for harvesting marijuana plants at his residence on the city's south end.

Samuel D. Patterson, 60, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to possession of marijuana greater than 30 grams, a Class D felony.

He is scheduled to be sentenced April 1 by Judge Don Daniel.

Charges against Patterson and his co-defendant, James R. Page, 62, of Lafayette, stemmed from a routine marijuana-spotting mission on Sept. 12, 2009, by Trooper Phil McBride of the Indiana State Police.

McBride is the marijuana eradication coordinator for the Lafayette district.

According to court documents, McBride was in a state police helicopter that afternoon when he spotted marijuana plants growing along Old U.S. 231 South.

This led police to Patterson's residence at 2453 Old U.S. 231 South. He and Page were found sitting outside.

During a search of the property, about 35 marijuana plants were found growing outside. Several more were found growing in the basement.

A shed appeared to have been set up as a drying room.

Page pleaded guilty to the same charge on Feb. 8. His sentencing hearing will be held on April 23.

Neither man was charged with dealing marijuana. Patterson admitted Tuesday that both he and Page were present when investigators arrived.

February 15, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Gang awareness seminars scheduled

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office is hosting a week of gang awareness and identification seminars for residents, police and other professionals.

Robert C. Walker, a nationally recognized gang specialist, will be in Tippecanoe County for a week to conduct the seminars.

The public event will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Feb. 23, in the Faith Community Center Multipurpose Room, 5526 Indiana 26 East.

Parents, educators, neighborhood associations and others concerned about gangs are encouraged to attend.

February 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

$29M awarded in damages for shaken infant

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was ordered to pay more than $29 million in compensatory and punitive damages for shaking his infant daughter and causing injuries that will require lifelong specialized medical care.

Judge Don Daniel imposed the hefty judgment against Gerald T. Schofield following a one-day bench trial on Feb. 3 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Schofield pleaded guilty in May 2008 to neglect of a dependent, a Class B felony, admitting that he angrily yanked Emma Schofield from an infant swing on Sept. 19, 2007. She was 6 weeks old.

"The defendant's misconduct is nearly as reprehensible as any conduct known to man," Daniel wrote in his three-page order.

Schofield, now 21, currently is serving a 10-year prison sentence in the Indiana Department of Correction's Putnamville facility. The civil lawsuit against him was filed by Lita Hildebrand, who is the mother of Emma and her twin sister, Olivia.

Her attorney, Michael Troemel, said it's unlikely that Hildebrand will recoup much — if any — of the $29,291,000 judgment.

But Troemel is hopeful that it will allow Hildebrand to eventually recoup some medical costs. Schofield's parental rights were terminated during a separate but related Child in Need of Services proceeding in Tippecanoe Superior Court 3.

"Effectively, that cut off any obligation for him to pay child support," Troemel said. "If he does work in the future, we hopefully can collect on part of it."

The twins currently are 2 1/2 years old.

Troemel said Emma suffered a significant brain injury that will require a daily nurse for the rest of her life. Her brain stopped growing, meaning that Emma's head will no longer grow though her body will.

The girl is able to sit up only if strapped.

"It's hard to foresee all the various medical issues she will endure," Troemel said.

"There are several things wrong with Emma. For example, she can't swallow. She has very little brain function, and most likely won't ever be able to walk.
"Emma's brain doesn't send messages like yours and mine."

According to court documents related to the criminal proceeding, Schofield was the primary caregiver of Emma and Olivia the morning of Sept. 17, 2007.

That day, Hildebrand took Emma to Home Hospital because the girl was gasping and could not be awakened. She was then transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

Devine and Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman testified on Hildebrand's behalf during last week's bench trial.

Schofield never obtained an attorney, and therefore had no representation. But Daniel allowed him to submit an affidavit to counter allegations in the civil complaint.

His projected release is September 2012. Schofield then must serve five years on supervised probation.

Troemel said Hildebrand currently lives with her grandparents in Lafayette. She is hoping to qualify for a Habitat for Humanity house, he said.

February 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man faces deportation rather than prison stay

-- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

With credit for time already served, a Lafayette man will not spend his one-year prison sentence behind bars for hitting his disabled, 7-year-old son and causing two black eyes.

But Cesar Arenas, 30, remains in custody in the Tippecanoe County Jail. He's being held through Immigration and Customs Enforcement and faces deportation from the United States.

Arenas was sentenced Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to one year in prison and six months on probation following a December guilty plea to battery on a child, a Class D felony.

The charge stemmed from a report Aug. 8, 2009, of a domestic disturbance at 2684 Priest Drive. Arenas, his wife and three children lived at that address.

Arenas admitted that he tried to hit the back of his son's head because the boy would not eat. The boy then turned his head, and Arenas instead struck his son's face.

The boy has Down syndrome, a genetic condition that delays a child's mental and physical development.

Under Arenas' plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, an additional charge of battery on a disabled person was dropped.

The plea also dismissed unrelated counts of fraud and counterfeiting filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said those offenses were dropped in exchange for Arenas' deportation.

She said Arenas has prior, unrelated convictions for identity theft, operating a vehicle while intoxicated and driving while suspended.

Arenas' three children currently are staying with his wife's parents. They could be reunited with their mother in the next few weeks, Zeman said.

February 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Burglar gets 10 years in 2002 case

A former Logansport man who fled Indiana shortly after being charged in a 2002 residential burglary in West Lafayette was sentenced Monday to 10 years in prison.

Randy L. Tate, 27, recently was released from prison in New York, where he served time for attempted robbery and possession of stolen property.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Tate was arrested there in July 2003.

He confessed to New York authorities about his involvement in a December 2002 burglary at a home on Eden Street in West Lafayette, Harrington said.

February 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea offered in confrontation with girl, 13

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces between six months and three years incarceration for assaulting a 13-year-old girl who

implicated him in a burglary last summer.

Devin Jerome Jovon Troupe, 19, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to battery on a child, a Class D felony.

He will be sentenced March 19, during which time Judge Thomas Busch will decide whether or not to accept the plea.

The allegation against Troupe stems from an incident on July 20, 2009, in the 1800 block of Morton Street, on Lafayette's north end.

Troupe admitted Monday that he and Sharlette Williams went there to confront the girl, who reported Troupe that morning as a potential suspect in a burglary at her neighbor's home.

A television and computer were taken.

Under questions posed by his attorney, Brian Dekker, Troupe further said he grabbed the girl by the wrist and -- when she resisted -- physically picked her up.

According to court documents, Troupe carried the girl toward a nearby van driven by his mother. Witnesses told investigators she was crying, screaming and choking.

He put the girl down after being confronted by neighbors.

Detective Herb Robinson said Monday that the burglary that prompted the incident is still under investigation. Troupe was never arrested on those allegations.

Williams, 28, pleaded guilty in September to battery on a child, a Class D felony, for striking the girl's face and nose.

She initially was sentenced to three years on Tippecanoe County Community Corrections -- some combination of work release, house arrest and day reporting.

Williams is now serving the remainder of her sentence in the Indiana Department of Correction for noncompliance.

February 9, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Klondike teacher pleads in pot case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Klondike Middle School teacher faces between six months and three years incarceration for helping a friend grow marijuana at a Lafayette residence.

James R. Page, 62, of Lafayette pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to possession of marijuana greater than 30 grams, a Class D felony.

His sentencing hearing is scheduled for April 23 before Judge Don Daniel.

Charges against Page and his co-defendant, Samuel D. Patterson, 60, of Lafayette, stemmed from a routine marijuana-spotting mission on Sept. 12, 2009, by Trooper Phil McBride of the Indiana State Police.

McBride is the marijuana eradication coordinator for the Lafayette district, said 1st Sgt. Brian Olehy, a public information officer.

According to court documents, McBride was in a state police helicopter that afternoon when he spotted marijuana

plants growing along Old U.S. 231 South.

This led police to Patterson's residence at 2453 Old U.S. 231 South. Both he and Page were found sitting outside.

During a search of the property, about 35 marijuana plants were found growing outside. Several more were found growing in the basement.

A shed appeared to have been set up as a drying room.

Page reportedly admitted to smoking marijuana recreationally. A book on growing marijuana was found in his vehicle.

Two days after the arrests, Page was placed on administrative leave from Klondike, where he was a seventh-grade wellness teacher. He resigned a month later.

Page had worked for Tippecanoe School Corp. for 39 years.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the plea agreement was open, meaning the length of Page's sentence will be left up to Daniel.

Patterson, who is retired, is scheduled to enter a similar guilty plea on Feb. 16 in Circuit Court.

February 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets probation for neglecting child's injuries

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman was sentenced Friday to 18 months on supervised probation for not getting her 5-year-old daughter medical attention after pieces of a plastic comb lodged in the girl's head.

But Virginia M. Delph, 31, likely will be sent to jail if she does not comply with her requirements in a related Child in Need of Services case, Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel warned.

"Ms. Delph, you have a beautiful little girl. How could you let this happen?" Daniel said, holding up a photo of the injury. "I'm not saying you're responsible for doing this.

"But you're responsible for leaving that in her head and for not getting her care and treatment."

Delph was charged with neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony, after a concerned neighbor contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office on Aug. 9.

According to court documents, Delph and her then-boyfriend, Brian K. Stewart, were arguing when Stewart reportedly smacked Delph's hand while Delph was combing her daughter's hair on Aug. 8.

The hit caused the comb to dig into the girl's head and break.

But instead of calling police or for an ambulance, Delph had called a neighbor. She tearfully apologized and acknowledged that the injury could have become infected or worse.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman argued for some time on community corrections, noting that Delph has missed counseling sessions in the CHINS case that could eventually help Delph regain custody of her daughter.

The girl currently is in foster care.

February 5, 2010: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Jury convicts man of murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Prosecutor Pat Harrington ended closing arguments Thursday morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 by demonstrating, on himself, how Derek J. Liphard was likely stabbed by his best friend, Jeremy D. Knoy.

The knife's blade faced up and penetrated Liphard's lower, right abdomen -- entering diagonally, toward the upper left. That meant Knoy, who is right-handed, stabbed Liphard from behind, Harrington told jurors.

"Then he went back with the bat and murdered him. Killed him," Harrington said. "There was no sign of a struggle ... . Nothing's displaced. Where's the struggle?"

The jury of six men and six women agreed.

They deliberated for about three hours Thursday afternoon before finding Knoy, 26, guilty of murder -- in other words, that Knoy knowingly stabbed and beat Liphard following an argument on Dec. 26, 2008.

His attorneys, deputy public defenders Michael Trueblood and Rachael Schexnailder, argued that Knoy was provoked by Liphard and acted in "sudden heat." Under Indiana law, that would have made the killing a lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter.

"This was not something that was a premeditated, planned-out event," Trueblood said during closing arguments. "There's no denying that he hit Derek multiple times.

"We need to know if Derek had that bat in his hand first. Was this done as a reaction ... or was this done as a plan?"

The incident between Knoy and Liphard, 26, took place the night of Dec. 26, 2008, at Knoy's home at 2312 N. 19th St. in Lafayette. The childhood friends spent the day drinking beer and whiskey.

Knoy testified Wednesday that they were in the kitchen, messing around and shadowboxing, when Liphard slapped him.

"I don't respond well to that," he told jurors. "I told him, 'Come on!' He slapped me again. I told him (expletive), and I pushed him. He pushed me back."

Insults were then exchanged, and Knoy told Liphard to leave.

Knoy's defense and the prosecutor's office disagreed on what happened next and on whether the killing was murder or voluntary manslaughter.

During his testimony Wednesday, Knoy said Liphard threatened first to hit him with a baseball bat. Knoy then went into a back bedroom and grabbed a knife to scare him.

"When he turned around, there was Derek with the bat," Trueblood said. "What other reason could we have for Derek being in the back bedroom?"

Were that the case, the provocation might have resulted in Knoy acting out of "sudden heat," a necessary condition for voluntary manslaughter.

But the evidence presented did not prove that Liphard was holding the bat or had threatened Knoy with it. Knoy

told jurors he could not remember details of their struggle until he realized he was hitting Liphard with the bat.

Trueblood said Knoy insisted on testifying.

"He wanted to publicly accept responsibility for his friend's death," Trueblood said. "He's not asking for sympathy."

Trueblood questioned why Lafayette police did not test the bat for fingerprints, which might have shown that Liphard had handled the bat.

According to police testimony, a choice had to be made between testing the bat for DNA or testing it for fingerprints, and DNA was chosen because fingerprints on such objects can overlap or smear and often are inconclusive.

In closing arguments, Harrington noted that the knife's broken-off handle was found by investigators in the kitchen sink. No traces of DNA could be analyzed from it.

But Knoy's hands at the time of his arrest were covered with blood spatter.

Harrington theorized that Knoy stabbed Liphard, washed the knife handle and then grabbed a baseball bat near his front door.

"He described the sound of the bat hitting Derek's skull. It means he was processing," Harrington said. "Not one blow hit any part of Derek's body but his head. Every blow was a kill shot.

"He lost it. Derek didn't provoke this."

Knoy faces between 45 and 65 years in prison on the murder conviction. He will be sentenced March 19 by Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams.

February 5, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Mom gets 18 months probation for neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman was sentenced this afternoon to 18 months on supervised probation for not getting her 5-year-old daughter medical attention after pieces of a plastic comb lodged in the girl's head.

But Virginia M. Delph, 31, likely will be sent to jail if she does not comply with her requirements in a related Child in Need of Services case, Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel warned.

"Ms. Delph, you have a beautiful little girl. How could you let this happen?" Daniel said, holding up a photo of the injury. "I'm not saying you're responsible for doing this.

"But you're responsible for leaving that in her head and for not getting her care and treatment."

Delph was charged with neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony, after a concerned neighbor contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office on Aug. 9.

According to court documents, Delph and her then-boyfriend, Brian K. Stewart, were arguing when Stewart reportedly smacked Delph's hand while Delph was combing her daughter's hair on Aug. 8.

This caused the comb to dig into the girl's head and break.

"My boyfriend came after me," Delph told Daniel during today's hearing. "I tried to get medical attention the next

day."

But instead of calling police or for an ambulance, Delph had called a neighbor. She tearfully apologized and acknowledged that the injury could have become infected or worse.

The sentence Daniel handed down was in line with recommendations made by Delph's attorney, Kirk Freeman, and the Tippecanoe County probation department.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman argued for some time on community corrections, noting that Delph has missed counseling sessions in the CHINS case that could eventually help Delph regain custody of her daughter.

The girl is in foster care.

"If you have the ability to make a child, then you need to have the wherewithal to support that child," Zeman said.

Delph pleaded guilty in January to the neglect charge.

Stewart, 42, is scheduled to stand trial on similar allegations in March

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February 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury: Lafayette man guilty of murder in friend's death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man committed murder when he stabbed and fatally beat his childhood best friend on Dec. 26, 2008, a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury decided.

Jurors deliberated for about three hours before returning the guilty verdict against Jeremy D. Knoy, 26.

Knoy's attorneys were pushing for voluntary manslaughter, arguing that Knoy acted in sudden heat when he killed Derek Liphard, 26.

Knoy will be sentenced on March 19 by Judge Randy Williams. He faces between 45 and 65 years in prison.

For updates, check back with jconline.com and read Friday's Journal & Courier.

February 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Defendant testifies in murder trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The afternoon of Dec. 26, 2008, began no differently than other times Jeremy D. Knoy had hung out with Derek Liphard, his best friend since childhood.

They shared a marijuana joint at Knoy's north Lafayette home, watched the comedy movie "Stepbrothers" and then stopped by a liquor store. Later they planned to go to Danzers Show Club.

Instead, before the night was through, Liphard, 26, of Monrovia was stabbed and beaten to death. Knoy was arrested and eventually charged with his murder.

Knoy's criminal trial is expected to wrap up today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

"I just remember seeing the knife on the wall as I was going to get it," said Knoy, 26, who took the stand Wednesday afternoon. "I still don't remember all that was said between us."

His roughly 30 minutes of testimony began with explaining their close-knit friendship.

Knoy first met Liphard on a playground when they were 8 years old.

After graduating from Harrison High School in 2001, they enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve and attended basic training in Oklahoma together -- via the Army's "buddy system."

Knoy then was sent to Afghanistan for 10 months.

Although Liphard moved near Indianapolis, he visited the Lafayette area every other weekend.

"We'd go to the bars and drink, or we would hang out at my house," Knoy said Wednesday. "We didn't ever fight. Maybe we pushed each other a few times, but that was it."

But he and Liphard argued the night of Dec. 26, 2008. According to Knoy, here's what took place:

The men were in Knoy's kitchen, messing around and shadowboxing, when Liphard slapped him. That annoyed Knoy, so he pushed Liphard back.

Liphard slapped him again.

They then began fighting, and Knoy told Liphard to leave his house. Knoy insulted Liphard, who said he would go to Danzers, a Lafayette strip club, alone.

Liphard then allegedly replied by calling Knoy's ex-girlfriend "a whore."

Knoy claimed that Liphard picked up a baseball bat that Knoy kept near his front door and threatened to hit him. Knoy said he "wanted to go get something to scare him with."

So he went into his bedroom and grabbed a knife that was hanging on a wall. Knoy said Liphard followed him back there and was holding the bat in the air, as though to strike him.

Knoy said he was not able to recall what specifically happened next, only that the two men were "locked up" and fighting. But Knoy admitted that he likely stabbed Liphard first.

"I went at him. I don't remember stabbing him," Knoy said. "I'm sitting on the bed after that. I'm swinging the bat down, staring at the wall.

"I kept swinging."

His attorneys, deputy public defenders Michael Trueblood and Rachael Schexnailder, are arguing that the incident amounts to voluntary manslaughter, or killing in sudden heat.

Trueblood said during opening statements that the argument was likely fueled by heavy alcohol consumption.

That day, the two men had taken shots of Jack Daniel's, finishing the bottle of whiskey, and drank nearly all of a 12-pack of Corona beer, Knoy said.

Devin Castell, a corrections officer at the Tippecanoe County Jail, testified Wednesday that Knoy appeared mildly to moderately intoxicated when booked in on Dec. 27, 2008.

The state is pushing for murder, which Indiana defines as knowingly or intentionally killing another person -- in other words, after some degree of planning.

During cross-examination, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington countered several portions of Knoy's story.

He questioned why Knoy, who would have had some first-aid training as an Army Reservist, didn't help Liphard after realizing his best friend was injured.

Dr.Allen Griggs, a pathologist, testified that Liphard was stabbed before being beaten. He likely would have been conscious after the knife wound.

"Is it possible that after you stabbed him, you grabbed the bat and turned up the music because you didn't want to hear him crying for help?" Harrington said.

"He had a nice house. He had a nice job. And he made fun of your ex-girlfriend, right?"

Knoy's next-door neighbor, Lee Robin, testified on Tuesday that he could hear heavy metal music blaring when he went to Knoy's front door that evening.

Also at issue is how the handle of the knife ended up in Knoy's kitchen sink. The knife's 9-inch blade was in Liphard's right abdomen when emergency responders arrived.

Knoy told Harrington that he did not remember anything between first grabbing the knife from the wall and later realizing he was repeatedly hitting Liphard with a baseball bat.

Knoy's testimony concluded shortly thereafter. Closing arguments were expected to begin this morning.

February 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

UPDATE: Knoy takes the stand in his own defense in murder trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man accused of stabbing and fatally beating his childhood friend claims the victim threatened him first with a baseball bat.

Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, took the stand this afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 in his own defense. He is charged with murder in the Dec. 26, 2008, death of Derek Liphard.

"I think, um, when he came at me ... . I don't know," Knoy told jurors. "I just kept going. I didn't stop. I don't know why.

"I was angry, and I was scared. I just lost control."

Liphard, 26, died of blunt force trauma.

On Dec. 26, 2008, the two days spent the day hanging out, drinking Corona beers and doing shots of Jack Daniels at Knoy's home at 2312 N. 12th St.

Here's what Knoy said took place:

The two men were in Knoy's kitchen, messing around and shadowboxing, when Liphard slapped him. That annoyed Knoy, so he pushed Liphard back.

Liphard slapped him again.

They then began fighting, and Knoy told Liphard to leave his house. The two had planned to go to Danzers Show

Club together that evening.

Knoy said he then insulted Liphard, who said he would go alone.

Liphard allegedly replied by calling Knoy's ex-girlfriend "a whore."

Knoy then claimed that Liphard picked up a baseball bat that Knoy kept near his front door. Knoy then "wanted to go get something to scare him with."

He went into his bedroom and grabbed a knife that was hanging on his wall. Knoy claimed that Liphard followed him there.

He was not able to recall what specifically happened next, only that the two men were "locked up" and fighting. But Knoy admitted that he likely stabbed Liphard first.

"I'm sitting on the bed after that. I'm swinging the bat down, staring at the wall," Knoy said. "I kept swinging."

His attorneys, deputy public defenders Michael Trueblood and Rachael Schexnailder, are arguing that the incident amounts to voluntary manslaughter, or killing in sudden heat.

But the state is pushing for murder.

While questioning Knoy, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington noted that the handle of the knife used to stab Liphard was later found in the kitchen sink.

The handle appeared to have been washed, and DNA could not be recovered.

Harrington further questioned why Knoy, an Army Reservist who served 10 months in Afghanistan, didn't help Liphard after realizing his best friend was injured.

"Is it possible that after you stabbed him, you grabbed the bat and turned up the music because you didn't want to hear him crying for help?" Harrington said.

"He had a nice house. He had a nice job. And he made fun of your ex-girlfriend, right?"

Knoy replied that he didn't remember what took place between grabbing the knife and later realizing he was repeatedly hitting Liphard with a baseball bat.

"You gave no help to him, did you?" Harrington said. "Instead, you lit a cigarette. ... How long did you sit there and watch him die?"

For more on this story, read Thursday's J&C.

February 3, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Attorney: Manslaughter, not murder, in Lafayette killing

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man killed his childhood friend following an “absolutely stupid, silly argument” that quickly escalated, defense attorney Michael Trueblood told jurors Tuesday morning.

But Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, committed voluntary manslaughter — not murder — when he fatally beat Derek Liphard on Dec. 26, 2008, Trueblood is arguing.

Knoy, who is charged with a single count of murder, is on trial this week in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

“This death was senseless, and Jeremy from the beginning has taken responsibility,” Trueblood said during opening statements. “I believe you will have a guilty verdict. That’s not easy to say, as a defense attorney.

“But it should be for voluntary manslaughter.”

In Indiana, murder is defined as knowingly or intentionally killing another person — in other words, it involved some degree of planning. The offense is punishable by 45 to 65 years incarceration.

Voluntary manslaughter is killing someone while acting under “sudden heat,” such as during a fight. The offense is a Class A felony, punishable by 20 to 50 years incarceration, if a deadly weapon is involved.

Liphard, 26, died of blunt force trauma. During opening statements, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Liphard was repeatedly struck with a baseball bat.

He also was stabbed once in the abdomen with a 9-inch knife. The blade was still stuck in Liphard when emergency responders arrived, though the handle was later found in Knoy’s kitchen sink, Harrington said.

Liphard and Knoy were childhood friends. After graduating from Harrison High School, both enlisted in the U.S. military and completed basic training together, according to testimony and information presented Tuesday.

On Dec. 28, 2008, the two friends spent the day hanging out, drinking Corona beers and doing shots of Jack Daniels at Knoy’s home on North 19th Street, Trueblood said.

He is arguing that Knoy was heavily intoxicated, which likely contributed to an argument with Liphard. Trueblood did not elaborate on the altercation, telling jurors that Knoy himself will explain what happened when he testifies.

“How could this happen between two best friends?” Trueblood said. “There are parts of the case in that 18-minute period that Jeremy still doesn’t remember.”

The state, however, contends that Knoy was aware of his actions.

Liphard’s badly injured body was found in a back bedroom, curled in a fetal position.
It appeared that someone pulled up the hood to Liphard’s sweatshirt after the beating — partially covering his head injuries, said Detective Paul Huff of the Lafayette Police Department, a crime scene investigator and blood spatter expert.
Blood spatter further showed that the baseball bat was pulled back four times, Huff said.

Jurors on Tuesday also listened to a brief 911 call in which Knoy calmly and succinctly told a dispatcher: “My name is Jeremy Knoy. I live at 2312 N. 19th St. I just killed my friend.”

Witnesses called on Tuesday included Liphard’s father, Jon Liphard, Knoy’s next-door neighbor, Lee Robin, and police officers.

Robin, who attended Harrison with Knoy and Liphard, detailed how he went to Knoy’s house that evening.

“I noticed red dots on his arms and his wide eyes,” Robin testified. “I asked him, ‘What are you guys doing? What’s that on your arms? What’s going on?’

“He said something like, ‘I just killed Derek. I would have gotten away with it if you didn’t show up.’ ”

Knoy is represented by deputy public defenders Trueblood and Rachael Schexnailder.

Harrington and Deputy Prosecutor John Schafer are presenting the case for the state.

The trial is expected to run through Friday.

February 2, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial continues into beating death

A Lafayette man killed his childhood friend following a "absolutely stupid, silly argument" that quickly escalated, defense attorney Michael Trueblood told jurors this morning.

But the Dec. 26, 2008, fatal beating on the city's north end amounts to voluntary manslaughter - not murder - he is arguing.

Trueblood's client, Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, is on trial this week in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 on a charge of murder in the death of Derek J. Liphard.

Liphard, 26, died of blunt force trauma. He was beaten with a baseball bat and stabbed once in his abdomen.

Opening statements began this morning, with the trial continuing through the day.

For the latest on the trial, read Wednesday's J&C

February 2, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Opening arguments set in killing trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man will stand trial this week on a charge of murder in connection to the Dec. 26, 2008, death of a childhood friend.

Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, is accused of fatally beating Derek J. Liphard with a baseball bat during an altercation at Knoy's North 19th Street residence.

Liphard, 26, died from blunt force trauma, according to the Tippecanoe County coroner's office. He also suffered a stab wound.

Opening statements in the murder trial will begin at 8:30 this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. Jury selection took about three hours Monday afternoon, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Liphard and Knoy had attended Harrison High School together.

According to court documents, Liphard, who lives near Indianapolis, was visiting Knoy on Dec. 26, 2008. The two reportedly spent the day drinking alcohol and hanging out.

That evening, Knoy called 911 to report Liphard's death. Emergency responders found Liphard in a back bedroom of Knoy's rental home. Blood splatter covered a large portion of the room.

Knoy allegedly told detectives that he remembered standing over Liphard and striking him with a baseball bat -- but could not explain why.

Detective Mark Pinkard of the Lafayette Police Department, lead investigator in the case, said Thursday that investigators had yet to determine a motive.

Knoy is represented by deputy public defenders Michael Trueblood and Rachael Schexnailder. Harrington and Deputy Prosecutor John Schafer will present the case for the state.

It will be the first criminal trial directly prosecuted by Harrington since he took office in January 2007.

It also will be the first murder case in Tippecanoe County to go before a jury since Michael Kelnhofer in August 2006.

Kelnhofer was acquitted of murder but found guilty of voluntary manslaughter in the April 26, 2005, shooting death of Jamie L. Gallivan, 27.

Other homicides in Tippecanoe County since then either resulted in guilty pleas or defendants who were charged with lesser offenses, such as fatal neglect of a dependent.

Knoy is charged with a single count of murder, which carries a potential punishment of 45 to 65 years in prison.

February 2, 2010: WLFI

Trial for man charged in friend's death
Police said Knoy told them he murdered Liphard

Updated: Tuesday, 02 Feb 2010, 4:05 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 02 Feb 2010, 2:25 PM EST

- Julie Krizen

The trial has begun for a Lafayette man charged with murdering his childhood friend.

26-year-old Jeremy Knoy is charged with the murder of 26-year-old Derek Liphard.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Liphard was found dead in December 2008 at 2312 North 19th Street, a house rented to Knoy.

The affidavit stated that Knoy told police he had struck Liphard with a baseball bat, but was unable to explain why he had done so and said he couldn't recall the chain of events that led to that action.

The affidavit stated that Liphard also suffered a stab wound.

Jury members heard opening statements in Superior Court One Tuesday morning.

The trial is expected to continue through the week.

February 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial starts in 2008 murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man will stand trial this week on a charge of murder in connection to the Dec. 26, 2008, death of a childhood friend.

Jeremy D. Knoy, 26, is accused of fatally beating Derek J. Liphard with a baseball bat during an altercation at Knoy's North 19th Street residence.

Liphard, 26, died from blunt force trauma, according to the Tippecanoe County coroner's office. He also suffered a single stab wound.

Opening statements in the murder trial will begin Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. Jury selection took

about three hours this afternoon, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Liphard and Knoy had attended Harrison High School together.

According to court documents, Liphard, who lives near Indianapolis, was visiting Knoy on Dec. 26, 2008. The two men reportedly spent the day drinking alcohol and hanging out.

That evening, Knoy called 911 to report Liphard's death. Emergency responders found Liphard in a back bedroom of Knoy's rental home. Blood splatter covered a large portion of the room.

Knoy allegedly told detectives that he remembered standing over Liphard and striking him with a baseball bat - but could not explain why.

Detective Mark Pinkard of the Lafayette Police Department, lead investigator in the case, said Thursday that investigators had yet to determine a motive.

Knoy is charged with a single count of murder, which carries a potential punishment of 45 to 65 years in prison.

For more on this story, read Tuesday's J&C.

January 28, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces federal child porn charge

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man has been charged in federal court with transportation of child pornography, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana announced today.

Christopher L. Laraneta, 39, appeared Wednesday before a judge in Hammond for this initial hearing.

The case is being jointly investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Lafayette Police Department and the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Further information on the allegations against Laraneta were not immediately available this morning.

January 26, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man faces 20 years for attempted molestation

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man faces up to 20 years in prison for having sexual contact with a 12-year-old boy.

Justin T. Stetler, 20, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to attempted child molesting, a Class B felony - avoiding a jury trial that was scheduled to begin today.

Stetler will be sentenced March 17 by Judge Randy Williams.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said the plea was done without the benefit of a plea agreement. A Class B felony is punishable by six to 20 years incarceration.

The allegations against Stetler took place on Christmas Eve in 2008, while he was home on leave from the U.S. Army.

According to court documents, Stetler was at a friend's house in Lafayette with the 12-year-old. The two were home alone when a relative of the boy showed up, interrupting the alleged incident.

Stetler was accused of holding the boy against his will.

January 25, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea entered in fatal shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG

A Carmel man faces between two and eight years in prison for fatally shooting his friend during an alcohol-fueled prank last August near the Purdue University campus.

Cory S. Lynch, 23, pleaded guilty today in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to reckless homicide, a Class C felony. He will be sentenced March 5 by Judge Don Daniel.

Lynch is accused of firing a .45-caliber handgun at Landon Siela, 22, of Fort Wayne, on Aug. 22. A bullet struck Siela in the throat, and he died a short time later.

The incident happened at 204 Wiggins St. in West Lafayette, where Lynch was living with Siela's longtime friend William Calderon. According to authorities, the friends had been drinking before the shooting.

According to court documents and information presented during today's hearing, before the fatal shooting, the three had been playing with an airsoft gun, which shoots rubber pellets at relatively low velocities.

Lynch and Calderon then decided to play a prank on Siela by using real firearms. Siela was shot after walking out of the bathroom.

The handgun Lynch used belonged to Calderon, who kept the loaded weapon in their apartment for protection.

Siela's parents, Ron and Janet Siela of Fort Wayne, sat directly behind Lynch during today's hearing. They shook hands and embraced afterward.

Under Lynch's plea agreement, additional charges of criminal recklessness and pointing a firearm could be dropped. Daniel has not yet accepted the plea.

Lynch's attorney, James Bell, and Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss asked that at least one hour be allotted for the March 5 sentencing hearing.

Calderon, 22, of Fort Wayne, pleaded guilty on Jan. 11 to pointing a firearm for his involvement. He will be sentenced March 9 by Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 Judge Les Meade.

January 25, 2010: WLFI TV

Lynch pleads guilty to shooting friend

Updated: Monday, 25 Jan 2010, 3:28 PM EST
Published : Monday, 25 Jan 2010, 3:21 PM EST

A former Purdue University student pled guilty to his role in the fatal shooting of his friend.

23-year-old Cory Lynch of Carmel admitted that he fired a handgun as a prank, killing 22-year-old Landon Siela of Fort Wayne.

The shooting happened on August 22, 2009 at 204 Wiggins Street in West Lafayette.

Lynch was emotional as his attorney, James Bell, described the events of the night.

Bell said Lynch had been drinking both beer and liquor throughout the day.

Bell said the men were playing pranks on each other.

Lynch was charged with reckless homicide, and could spend up to eight years in prison.

Lynch and William Calderon will both be sentenced in March in the death of Siela.

Calderon faces a misdemeanor count of pointing a firearm

January 22, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

UPDATE: Jury says Lafayette man guilty in 3-year-old's death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury came back with a guilty verdict this afternoon for a Lafayette man accused of causing severe head injuries that killed his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter.

Thomas A. Dexter, 31, faces between 20 and 50 years in prison for neglect of a dependent causing death, a Class A felony.

The girl, Kimberly "Kimmy" Snow, died on May 5, 2009, five days after a frantic Dexter called 911, reporting that he found Kimmy partially submerged in bathwater.

At the time, they were living at 3032 Phipps Court in the Country View Estates apartment complex on Lafayette's south end.

This afternoon, the case against Dexter continued with the court considering whether he is a habitual offender.

January 22, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Parents plead after son, 3, wanders into traffic

STAFF REPORTS

- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette couple has admitted to leaving their toddler-aged son home alone when he somehow got outside and ran into oncoming traffic last month.

The boy was not seriously injured.

His parents, Joel Cervantes-Cancino, 30, and Mariana Soto-Castillo, 25, each pleaded guilty this afternoon in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

They will be sentenced Feb. 26 by Judge Don Daniel.

According to court documents, the couple left their 3-year-old son home alone the morning of Dec. 29 while Cervantes-Cancino drove his wife to work at a Lafayette restaurant.

Shortly after, the boy ran onto Indiana 38 near Poplar Lane on Lafayette's east side. He collided with a passing vehicle's side mirror.

It was 9 degrees and dark outside.

The couple's attorney, Michael Troemel, said today that they are upset by what happened and wanted to plead.

"They have no prior record. They admitted their guilt immediately after," he said. "They have quite a bit of community support. ... The state took into consideration that they have no prior record."

Under an agreement with the prosecutor's office, Cervantes-Cancino and Soto-Castillo each pleaded guilty to neglect as a Class D felony. They had been charged with neglect as a Class C felony, which carries a lengthier sentencing range.

Troemel said the couple's 3-year-old and a 5-year-old sibling remain in foster care.

Cervantes-Cancino and Soto-Castillo each face between six months and three years incarceration. They also have a hold on them through Immigration and Customs Enforcement, meaning they face possible deportation from the U.S.

January 20, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder suspect asks for public defender

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A public defender will be appointed to represent a Lafayette man suspected of killing his still-missing roommate following an altercation 13 months ago.

Wesley E. Kelly, 29, appeared for his initial hearing Tuesday before Tippecanoe County Magistrate Norris Wang on charges of murder, battery and being a habitual offender.

Kelly was brought to the brief hearing at the Tippecanoe County Jail from the Miami Correctional Facility in Bunker Hill, where he is serving a three-year prison sentence for failing to register as a sex offender.

The new charges against Kelly -- filed Thursday -- stem from the disappearance of Steven L. Smith, 52, of Lafayette. Smith was last seen alive on Dec. 6, 2008.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Tuesday that he was unaware of any prior occasions in which Tippecanoe County proceeded with murder charges against someone without recovering the suspected victim's body.

The Web site "No Body Murder Cases" -- www.nobodymurdercases.com -- has documented seven such instances in Indiana, dating back to 1970 in Clinton County. Of those, five ended in convictions and two with acquittals.

The site is run by Tad DiBiase, a former federal prosecutor in Washington, D.C. It includes a table of 300 cases across the country in which murder charges were filed despite investigators not locating a body.

Allegations against Kelly stem from an apparent fight he and Smith had at their apartment on South Fourth Street in Lafayette on Dec. 6, 2008.

According to court documents, the two men then ended up on a downtown railroad bridge over the Wabash River. Investigators suspect Smith was struck with a padlock, causing him to fall in the water.

During Tuesday's initial hearing, Wang read aloud the charges against Kelly.

Murder in Indiana carries a sentencing range of 45 to 65 years in prison. If convicted of that and being a habitual offender, Kelly faces an additional 55- to 165-year sentencing enhancement, Wang said.

Kelly requested the public defender. He said he has been incarcerated for 13 months thus far on the failure to register conviction.

Harrington previously told the Journal & Courier that authorities waited a year to file charges in case Smith's body or other evidence was found by people hunting or fishing along the Wabash during summer and fall.

January 15, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder charges filed against roommate

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Tippecanoe County's prosecutor is confident that investigators have sufficient evidence to go forward with criminal proceedings against a Lafayette man suspected of killing his roommate -- despite never locating the victim's body.

Wesley E. Kelly, 29, was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with murder in the suspected death of Steven L. Smith, 52, who was last seen alive on Dec. 6, 2008.

The prosecutor's office met Wednesday with Smith's family.

"We are pleased and ready to move forward with the case," his cousin and family spokeswoman, Cyndi Miller of Danville, said.

Kelly also was charged Thursday with misdemeanor battery and being a habitual offender. He currently is serving a three-year sentence in the Indiana Department of Correction for failing to register as a sex offender.

The allegations against Kelly stem from an apparent fight with Smith on Dec. 6, 2008, at their apartment on South Fourth Street in Lafayette.

The investigation began when Smith's family and neighbors contacted police on Dec. 11, 2008, after days of not hearing from him or seeing him.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Thursday, Smith's mother, Doris Smith, told police that her son's apartment was "unusually clean and neat" and that toiletry items were missing -- appearing as though no one lived there.

Neighbors also said that Kelly reportedly admitted to fighting with Smith, which included slamming Smith's head into a wall and a toilet. The affidavit does not provide a reason for the fight.

Investigators suspect that the two men were later standing on a downtown railroad bridge over the Wabash River when Smith was struck with a padlock that was attached to a rope.

The blow reportedly knocked Smith into the water.

"Any new information or leads that are developed -- we will continue to work those," Detective Mike Humphrey said.

Law enforcement and firefighters have searched in and along the Wabash's banks numerous times in the past year for Smith's body. Those attempts, which included searching via horseback, helicopter and by boat, were not successful.

"It presents a unique situation, proceeding with a murder case without having an actual body," Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said. "But there have been a number of similar, successful prosecutions around the country."

It's a scenario that Patti Bishop, founder of volunteer search organization IN Hope, knows well. Her stepdaughter, Karen Jo Smith, went missing on Dec. 27, 2000, in Marion County.

Karen Jo Smith's body was never recovered, but the woman's ex-husband, Steve Halcomb, was convicted in December 2004 of murder and later sentenced to 95 years in prison.

Steven Smith and Karen Jo Smith are not related.

"You have the fear from the moment we knew the grand jury indicted," Bishop recalled Thursday. "Even though we knew that he did it, until the jury comes back with that conviction ...

"It was a surreal experience, especially since there was no body."

Bishop speaks daily with Miller, Steven Smith's cousin. Her organization also has helped the family put together prayer vigils and hand out fliers with Smith's information to Lafayette businesses.

What kept Bishop strong during the trial for her stepdaughter's convicted killer was faith in prosecutors and Marion County investigators.

"I give kudos to any law enforcement agency that has taken this step," Bishop said. "Crimes of this type -- where there is no body -- is happening more and more. It can be done."

Harrington said authorities waited a year to file charges in case Smith's body or other evidence was found by people hunting or fishing along the Wabash during summer and spring.

January 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen accused in auto theft, crash heads to adult court

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A 15-year-old Lafayette boy will be tried as an adult on accusations that he fled from police in a stolen vehicle and caused a crash in downtown last month that seriously injured two people.

Judge Loretta Rush of Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court, waived Levi Saltsman from juvenile jurisdiction following an hour-long hearing this morning.

Rush cited the teenager's extensive criminal history - which includes juvenile adjudications for felony theft, resisting law enforcement and burglary - in her decision.

An adjudication is similar to a criminal conviction for adults.

"It's with an extremely heavy heart that the court finds this burden has been met," Rush said, referring to a waiver motion filed by the prosecutor's office.

"There is no other tool in the juvenile justice system that could lead to rehabilitation. ... It's a sad day. It's a sad

day in Tippecanoe County."

Saltsman, who was booked into the Tippecanoe County Jail this morning, sat emotionless during most of the hearing. After Rush announced her decision, he lowered his head and wiped away tears.

The teenager's father declined to comment afterward.

The incident that prompted today's hearing began the night of Dec. 10, after a Ford Expedition was stolen from a parking lot at Market Square Lanes, off Elmwood Avenue.

Within minutes, Lafayette police officers Matthew Gard and Ryan Sanders spotted the sport utility vehicle on North 12th Street near Greenbush Street.

That led to a minute-long pursuit into downtown Lafayette.

The Expedition crashed at Third and Columbia streets into a Pontiac G6 driven by Damon A. Mathewson of Lafayette.

Mathewson, 31, was hospitalized for five days at Home Hospital. His wife, Kinzie Mathewson, 28, remains in critical condition at an Indianapolis hospital, according to Scott Angstadt, Tippecanoe County's deputy chief juvenile probation officer.

He testified during today's hearing.

Angstadt said Kinzie Mathewson suffered a traumatic brain injury, which has affected her ability to form sentences.

"She's switching nouns with verbs," Angstadt told Rush. "... She sustained some very significant injuries."

He said doctors were able to reattach the lower part of her leg and that Damon Mathewson is confident his wife will be able to transfer soon to a rehabilitation facility.

According to Angstadt's testimony and arguments made during the hearing by Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Hagen, Saltsman has been arrested 12 times since he was 13 years old.

He was on home detention - meaning electronic monitoring - at the time of the Dec. 10 pursuit and crash. The teen's parents apparently had been sleeping when Saltsman left their home.

In May, Saltsman was arrested on suspicion of criminal recklessness and residential entry. He was accused of breaking down the door of another teenager with whom he had an disagreement and assaulting that boy.

Angstadt testified that he was against waiving Saltsman from juvenile jurisdiction, explaining that Saltsman would receive little to no services in the adult Indiana Department of Correction.

Both Angstadt and Saltsman's attorney, John Phillips, argued that putting a 15-year-old with adult criminals would be more damaging.

But Rush pointed out that Tippecanoe County has already spent about $23,000 on rehabilitation services for Saltsman - among them, behavior modification, counseling and day reporting.

Hagen argued that Saltsman is a danger to the community.

"Levi Saltsman, when you look at his record, he takes what he wants when he wants," Hagen said. "When someone tries to stop him, he resists law enforcement. He has no respect for that authority."

Rush set Saltsman's bond at $15,000. She asked that arrangements be made at the Tippecanoe County Jail to keep the teenager segregated from adult inmates.

January 12, 2010: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Case of child left on bus goes to prosecutor

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

- Contributing: Meranda Watling/mwatling@jconline.com

Prosecutors could soon determine whether criminal charges are warranted against a Tippecanoe School Corp. bus driver accused of leaving a second-grader asleep on a bus at the end of his route.

Detective Matt Devine of the Lafayette Police Department said he forwarded his investigation of the Jan. 5 incident to the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office this afternoon.

No arrests have yet been made, and no citations have been issued, pending the prosecutor's decision, Devine said. He described the bus driver as cooperative in the investigation.

Police and TSC officials have not identified the driver or the female student.

The driver is suspected of failing to check his bus for riders at the end of the route - a violation of Tippecanoe School Corp. policy and Indiana law.

The 8-year-old woke up in freezing temperatures that afternoon, got off the bus and walked to the nearby Walgreens on Old U.S. 231 for help.

Walgreens is about a quarter-mile from TSC's bus barn on Elston Road.

Under an Indiana law that took effect last July, bus drivers must walk the length of the bus interior at the end of their route to ensure no child gets left behind.

Failing to do so is a Class C infraction, punishable by a fine up to $500.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman, who typically prosecutes crimes involving children, said today that she also plans to look into whether the incident constitutes neglect of a dependent.

Indiana defines neglect as when someone - whether assumed voluntarily or by legal obligation - knowingly or intentionally places a dependent in a situation that endangers the child's life.

"The law is clear, for instance, if you were the baby sitter in this situation," Zeman said. "But it is not clear for bus drivers. I will have to look into case law to see if there have been any similar situations."

The TSC school board is expected to approve terminating the driver's employment at its meeting on Wednesday. Superintendent Scott Hanback said that will be his recommendation.

January 12, 2010: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Mom pleads guilty to failing to get daughter medical help

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette woman faces between six months and three years incarceration for failing to get medical attention for her 5-year-old daughter after pieces of a plastic comb lodged in the girl's head.

Virginia M. Delph, 31, pleaded guilty this morning in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

She will be sentenced Feb. 5 by Judge Don Daniel.

Delph's boyfriend, Brian K. Stewart, 42, is scheduled to stand trial on similar allegations in March.

The charges stemmed from at incident Aug. 8 at the couple's apartment on Brampton Drive.

According to court documents, the two had been arguing when Stewart reportedly smacked Delph's hand while Delph was combing her daughter's hair. This caused the comb to dig into the girl's head and break.

The plastic pieces had been embedded in the girl's head for about one day. A concerned neighbor then contacted the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

Delph told investigators she did not have a vehicle to drive her daughter for medical treatment. She allegedly did not call an ambulance or police because of the potential cost.

January 12, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Judge wants to hear from shooting victim's family

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Purdue University student will be sentenced in March for his involvement in an alcohol-fueled prank and fatal shooting in August that killed a childhood friend.

William J. Calderon, 22, of Fort Wayne pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to pointing a firearm, a Class A misdemeanor.

Judge Les Meade declined to immediately accept the plea, noting that he felt family members of the victim, 21-year-old Landon Siela of Fort Wayne, deserved to have a say.

"You will have the right to be heard," Meade said to Landon Siela's father, Ron Siela, who was seated in the courtroom's gallery. "... Frankly, we need to save a good amount of time for this."

Ron Siela, of Fort Wayne, declined to comment after Monday's hearing.

The fatal shooting took place Aug. 22 at an apartment at 204 Wiggins St. in West Lafayette, near Purdue's campus. It was two days before classes began.

Calderon said he and his roommate, Cory S. Lynch, 23, had just moved in that weekend. Landon Siela, a student at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, was visiting.

Lynch, of Carmel, is accused of firing the fatal shot that struck Landon Siela in his throat. Lynch is charged in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with reckless homicide, criminal recklessness and pointing a firearm.

All counts against him are felonies. Lynch is tentatively scheduled to stand trial Feb. 2.

During Monday's hearing, Calderon said the three friends had spent much of Aug. 22 consuming beer and hard liquor. Calderon estimated having between 10 and 12 shots. He had a blood-alcohol content of 0.19 percent shortly after the shooting.

That day, the three had been playing with an airsoft gun, which shoots rubber pellets at low velocities.

For unclear reasons, Calderon said he and Lynch then decided to play a prank on Landon Siela by using real weapons. They came up with this plan while Landon Siela was outside.

Calderon grabbed and "cleared" a Springfield .45-caliber handgun, meaning the weapon was not loaded. That

handgun belonged to Landon Siela, according to court documents.

Lynch then got hold of Calderon's Kimber .45-caliber handgun, which Calderon said he kept loaded in their apartment for protection.

Calderon told the court that he did not see Lynch clear the handgun before pointing it and pulling the trigger, fatally injuring Landon Siela. This occurred after Landon Siela had walked out of the bathroom.

He said Lynch knew the weapon was loaded because "we had both talked about it earlier in the day."

Under Calderon's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, his sentence will be left up to Meade. A Class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to 365 days in jail and a $5,000 fine.

January 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Molester gets 35 years for 'unforgivable' acts

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man who performed sexual acts on and showed pornographic to a 5-year old girl in his care was sentenced today to 35 years in prison.

It was the maximum punishment that Karl J. Griffin, 29, faced under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The girl's grandfather, speaking on behalf of his family, urged Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to hand down a sentence that would dissuade others from committing such "crimes of evil."

"My life experiences did not prepare me for the horror," the man said, his hands and voice shaking and he stood to face Williams. "... Childhood is supposed to be a time of growing, learning and having fun.

"I'm without words to share my own sorrow and anger."

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify victims of sexual-based crimes or their family members.

The allegations against Griffin stemmed from an investigation in December 2008 by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. The girl told a baby-sitter that she had been touched sexually by Griffin.

This occurred on various instances between February and December 2008.

Sheriff's Detective Nathan Brown testified during today's sentencing hearing. He brought with him a bag of evidence collected from Griffin's home that contained sexual paraphernalia Griffin admitted using in the crimes.

Part of that evidence included adult playing cards and magazines that Griffin tried to burn after he was confronted by the baby-sitter.

Griffin pleaded guilty in December in Superior Court 1 to an amended count of attempted child molesting, a Class A felony.

"The things that I have done are unforgivable," Griffin told the court today. "I am ashamed and appalled by myself. The reason I am here today is because I know I deserve punishment.

"I could not take the coward's approach and commit suicide."

Griffin had tried to get admitted to Wabash Valley Hospital in West Lafayette shortly after the sheriff's

department was contacted in December 2008, saying he was suicidal.

Two days later, he turned himself in at the Lafayette Police Department.

Williams today ordered that Griffin serve 10 years on probation after he is released from the Indiana Department of Correction.

Griffin also was deemed a sexually violent predator, meaning he must be listed on Indiana's Sexual and Violent Offender Registry for life, along with other strict requirements.

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January 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged for throwing coffee on judge

- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man suspected of throwing a cup of coffee on a Tippecanoe County judge last week was charged today with battery.

Dale McGrew Jr., 29, was arrested Dec. 28 by the Lafayette Police Department shortly after a confrontation with Judge Michael Morrissey of Tippecanoe Superior Court 6.

The two men had gotten into an argument at Lafayette Bank & Trust at Third and Main streets in downtown Lafayette when McGrew allegedly tried to steal money Morrissey had just withdrawn from an ATM, Morrissey previously told the Journal & Courier.

McGrew then allegedly threw coffee on the judge as Morrissey was leaving the bank. McGrew was then spotted near the courthouse lawn, where he was stopped by courthouse security bailiffs and Lafayette police officers.

White County Prosecutor Bob Guy said today that he was been appointed special prosecutor in the case.

McGrew is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 with battery, a Class B misdemeanor. He was being held Friday afternoon without bond in the Tippecanoe County Jail, jail staff said.

According to Tippecanoe County's online court database, that's because McGrew was on probation for an unrelated theft conviction at the time of the Dec. 28 incident.

January 8, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Robbery defendant: 'I made a mistake'
Man given home detention for part in robbery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man will likely serve 18 months on home detention for going along with a group of people accused of robbing -- and then beating -- a West Lafayette man for drugs.

Joshua W. Steele, 20, pleaded guilty in December in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to theft, a Class D felony, in connection with a May 15 home invasion at Point West, off Klondike Road.

The victim, Steven Jennings, was pinned to the ground, punched and kicked.

Steele was sentenced Thursday to 18 months on community corrections, which Judge Thomas Busch recommended be spent on home detention.

That will be followed by 18 months on supervised probation.

All five suspects -- Steele, Brandon M. Goldsberry-Rishel, 20, Zachary N. Cooley, 20, Teal N. Taylor, 21, and Latasha A. Moore, 19 -- have pleaded guilty for their involvement.

According to court documents, the group was after Jennings' morphine pills.

During Thursday's sentencing hearing, Steele said he had not realized the group was robbing Jennings' until Taylor and Moore ran outside.

Steele at the time was alone in a vehicle parked near Jennings' mobile home. He told the judge that he broke up the beating but acknowledged that he should not have gone along at all.

"I know that I made a mistake," Steele said. "I made a horrible judgment about who I was hanging out with. ... But I think everything happens for a reason.

"This helped change my life around."

Busch, too, said Steele should have realized something was wrong beforehand. For instance, how were they planning to buy drugs when none of them had money?

"After hearing everyone's story, I'm scratching my head as to who's responsible," Busch said. "If you're going along with the crowd, you're part of the crowd."

Steele was given a combined 476 days for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

All five defendants must pay Jennings a combined $8,685 in restitution for medical costs.

January 7, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man accused of molesting two sisters

-- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of having sexual contact with two sisters, a 9-year-old and a 6-year-old, who temporarily were in his care.

Joaquin Chavez, 29, was charged Dec. 30 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of child molesting, a Class C felony, and sexual battery, a Class D felony.

He was being held Wednesday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $10,000 surety bond.

Detective Sgt. Doug Caldwell of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office said the investigation began when Chavez himself called authorities on Nov. 19.

Chavez apparently was upset about accusations made against him by the girls' mother.

Caldwell said investigators suspect the allegations occurred sometime in the past year, most recently last June or

July.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Chavez had watched the girls for about 15 days a year ago while their mother was in Mexico. The girls' mother told a sheriff's deputy that her daughters only recently approached her, claiming Chavez had "forced himself upon them" on multiple occasions.

Both girls were treated this past summer for genital infections that required antibiotics. Chavez recently was treated at an Indianapolis clinic for a genital infection. Chavez, however, denied committing any acts that could have spread his infection to the girls.

January 6, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Robbery sentence handed down

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man accused of forcing his way inside a West Lafayette mobile home and assaulting a male occupant was sentenced Tuesday to six years in prison.

Brandon M. Goldsberry-Rishel, 20, was one of five Lafayette residents charged in the May 15 home invasion and robbery at Point West, off Klondike Road.

The victim, Steven Jennings, was punched, kicked and pinned to the ground. A woman -- the girlfriend of Jennings' brother -- and her two children were not injured.

Goldsberry-Rishel pleaded guilty in September in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to theft, a Class D felony, and an amended count of conspiracy to commit robbery, a Class C felony.

He had originally been charged with conspiracy to commit robbery as a Class B felony, which carries a more lengthy sentencing range.

All five suspects -- Goldsberry-Rishel, Zachary N. Cooley, 20, Joshua W. Steele, 20, Teal N. Taylor, 21, and Latasha A. Moore, 19 -- have pleaded guilty for their involvement.

"It's very, very rare when someone comes to court and says I'm the one responsible," Judge Thomas Busch said Tuesday, noting that the defendants have all shifted blame onto someone else.

"People start thinking with kind of a mob mentality. ... when in fact, it was all of you making each other do bad things."

Goldsberry-Rishel nodded in agreement.

According to court documents, the group was after Jennings' morphine pills. Taylor had sent Jennings a text message earlier in the evening, asking if she could stop by.

Taylor and Moore were inside the mobile home for about 15 minutes when the three male suspects charged in.

All were arrested shortly after the home invasion and robbery.

Busch also ordered Goldsberry-Rishel to serve two years on probation after his release. He received a combined 570 days credit for time already served in Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

All five defendants must pay Jennings a combined $8,685 in restitution.

Steele is scheduled to be sentenced Thursday. Taylor and Moore are scheduled for sentencing in February.Cooley was sentenced in October to a combined 10 years in prison, community corrections and probation.

January 4, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2 charged in downtown burglary, stabbing

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges were filed today against two suspects in a residential burglary last week in downtown Lafayette in which one victim was stabbed.

Latroy Devon Maxwell, 22, and Brian Christopher Smith, 25, are each charged in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with attempted burglary, a Class A felony.

Warrants were issued Thursday for their arrest.

Investigators are actively trying to locate both Maxwell and Smith. The two men have criminal ties in Lafayette and the Chicago area, according to Lt. Tom Davidson, a detective with the Lafayette Police Department.

He said they are considered armed and dangerous.

The burglary took place a week ago today at 317 S. Sixth St., three blocks south of Lafayette City Hall and the Lafayette Police Department.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Charles Helvie II and Heida Mass returned home that night and were attacked by three men shortly after stepping inside.

Items were stacked on a couch, and stereo equipment was stacked on the floor in the apartment's office.

Helvie, 44, suffered at least two stab wounds to his abdomen that required surgery at Home Hospital. Both he and Mass, 39, were repeatedly struck with a four-way tire tool.

Davidson said Mass recognized Smith, whom she previously met through a friend. Mass also told officers that Smith had previously stolen her apartment key.

He said investigators found no indication of forced entry into Helvie and Long's residence.

"It appeared that they were in wait," Davidson said of the suspects.

Maxwell was identified as a potential suspect through prior connections with Smith. Mass then identified Maxwell while viewing photo lineups on Tuesday.

According to the affidavit, a fingerprint lifted from a discarded container of juice in the Sixth Street apartment also implicated Maxwell.

Don Stigen, a Tippecanoe County sheriff's employee who was trained in fingerprint classification through the FBI, matched it to Maxwell's right index finger, based on a fingerprint card for Maxwell previously taken at the Tippecanoe County Jail.

The third suspect was not charged or identified in court documents filed today. Davidson said the investigation is ongoing.

Helvie was no longer listed today as a patient at Home Hospital. Mass is being held in the jail on a warrant for violating probation for an unrelated offense in Colorado.

The Colorado Department of Corrections' Web site does not identify the specific type of crimes for which Mass was convicted.

Maxwell is described as a black male, 6-foot-2 to 6-foot-3 and 170 to 175 pounds. He has black hair and brown eyes.

Smith is a black male, 5-foot-8 and 190 to 230 pounds. He has black hair and brown eyes.

Anyone with information on their whereabouts is asked to call Lafayette police at (765) 807-1200. Tips also can be left anonymously through WeTip, (800) 782-7463.

January 1, 2010: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drug deals return man to prison

A Chicago man on parole for an attempted murder conviction was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years for selling crack cocaine to undercover police.

Jeremiah J. Smith, 37, was sentenced to 20 years in Indiana Department of Correction followed by two years of probation in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, said Prosecutor Pat Harrington. Smith pleaded guilty to dealing cocaine, a Class A felony, in October.

Smith was charged with selling a total of $250 of crack cocaine to undercover police on two occasions in 2008, Harrington said.

Smith's criminal history includes a 1992 conviction for attempted murder in Cook County, Ill. He was sentenced to 25 years and was released on parole in 2004.

December 31, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Defendant: 'Bad decision' led to Valentine's Day stabbing

By JUSTIN L. MACK;jmack@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison for stabbing his ex-boyfriend this past Valentine's Day at a home in the Benjamin Crossing subdivision.

Kenneth E. Jenkins III, 26, pleaded guilty earlier this month to battery committed by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony.

Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Jenkins to serve four years in the Department of Correction and suspended two years to be served on probation. He has 320 days of jail credit.

Jenkins said the stabbing came at the end of a physical altercation spurred by allegations of cheating and other relationship issues.

"I should have ran. The stabbing was not necessary at all," he said. "I had choices, and I made the wrong one.

"That bad decision has negatively affected so many people."

The victim, Joshua A. Neeley, 28, underwent surgery to remove his spleen and repair damage to his liver and

diaphragm, according to court documents.

Jenkins said the stabbing came after an argument that began at a Lafayette restaurant and bar.

Jenkins said alcohol and his abusive childhood played a role in his impulse to stab Neeley.

"I had every right to defend myself, but I had no right to stab Joshua," he said.

"I have lost everything."

Several friends and community members attended the Wednesday sentencing in support of Jenkins.

"I'm impressed by the defendants community support," said Busch.

Busch also took notice of Jenkins' criminal record that includes a conviction for two instances of operating a vehicle while intoxicated. Jenkins was on probation for alcohol related offenses at the time of the stabbing.

"There is an unusual pattern of crimes with crimes of dishonesty, substance abuse in regards to alcohol and now domestic violence," said Busch. "There is no other history of violence, but a series of anti-social events.

"It's either an issue of self-control, or a defiance and disregard for the law."

December 31, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 years for man who helped in Bridgewater robbery

STAFF REPORTS

A Gary man was sentenced to six years today for helping his cousins carry out an armed robbery four years ago that nearly killed another man at a south Lafayette apartment.

Jarmone D. Davis, 25, pleaded guilty in July to the charge of assisting a criminal, a Class C felony, in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, according to Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Davis was with two cousins on June 30, 2005, during a botched robbery when the victim, Darius R. Ford, was shot seven times. Investigators said the three were trying to steal money and cocaine from Ford in his Bridgewater Circle apartment.

Davis' cousins - Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis - each already pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery.

December 31, 2009: WLFI TV

Community Corrections K9 graduates
First K9 unit for Tippecanoe County program

Updated: Thursday, 31 Dec 2009, 4:40 PM EST
Published : Thursday, 31 Dec 2009, 4:28 PM EST

- Jeff Smith

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County's Community Corrections program has a new monitoring tool. The canine officer, "Buddy," graduated from the Allen County Sheriff's Department Canine School in Fort Wayne Thursday morning.

Community Corrections Executive Director Dave Heath said a canine officer is a "new venture" for the department. "We have 325 people right now that are on house arrest, plus we have, you know, up to 168 people in-house in the work-release program, so to be able to clear those areas and those houses of any potential violations is going to be a real benefit to Community Corrections," Heath said.

Buddy's handler, Community Corrections Surveillance Officer Tom Merkley, said Buddy will help him monitor people on house arrest and work release.

" What we'll be doing with Buddy is, our participants on home detention and daily reporting who are in their homes serving their sentence, they'll allow us to go into their homes and to look for narcotics and firearms, ammunition, anything that they're not supposed to have that he is trained for, while they're serving on home detention."
Heath said Buddy is considered a "friendly" dog, a reference to his breed and level of aggression.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department donated a vehicle for the K-9 program. Buddy was funded by the prosecutor's pre-trial diversion fund, which includes money seized by police during drug operations.

December 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 20 years for selling crack

STAFF REPORTS

A Chicago man on parole for an attempted murder conviction was sentenced today to 20 years for selling crack cocaine to undercover police.

Jeremiah J. Smith, 37, was sentenced to 20 years in Indiana Department of Corrections followed by two years of probation in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, said Prosecutor Pat Harrington. Smith pleaded guilty dealing cocaine, a Class A felony, in October.

In August and November 2008 Smith sold a total of $250 of crack cocaine to members of the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit and the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force. The sale lead to felony charges, Harrington said.

Harrington said Smith's criminal history includes a 1992 conviction for attempted murder in Cook County, Ill. Smith was sentenced to 25 years and later received parole in 2004.

December 30, 2009: WLFI TV

Prison time for man linked to shooting
Trial ended when witness changed story

Updated: Wednesday, 30 Dec 2009, 2:44 PM EST
Published : Wednesday, 30 Dec 2009, 2:44 PM EST

- Jeff Smith

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Gary man will serve six years in prison for his part in an armed robbery in Lafayette that ended in a shooting.

25 year old Jarmone Davis had been charged with attempted murder, robbery, and conspiracy to commit robbery. Davis pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of assisting a criminal after a co-defendant testified that Davis was not at the scene of the shooting. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the co-defendant previously told

investigators that Davis was at the scene, in the Mill Creek subdivision in June, 2005

Darius Ford was shot several times in what police said was a botched attempt to rob him of money and cocaine.

Davis was sentenced to six years in the Indiana Department of Corrections, all of it to be executed.

December 30, 2009: WLFI TV

Cocaine conviction sends man to prison
Also served time for attempted murder

Updated: Wednesday, 30 Dec 2009, 2:53 PM EST
Published : Wednesday, 30 Dec 2009, 2:53 PM EST

- Jeff Smith

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A man who was sentenced to 25 years in prison for attempted murder in Cook County, Illinois, has been sentenced to prison for selling cocaine in Lafayette.

37 year old Jeremiah J. Smith was sentenced to 22 years in prison, with two years suspended, for selling cocaine to undercover officers in Tippecanoe County in August, 2008. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Smith told police he was living in Evansville and Harvey, Illinois. Harrington said Smith was originally from Chicago.

Harrington said Smith was convicted of attempted murder in Cook County, Illinois, in 1992. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison in that case, but was paroled in 2004.

December 22, 2009: WLFI TV

Dealer hid heroin in stomach fat rolls
Sentenced to 28 years in prison

Updated: Tuesday, 22 Dec 2009, 4:59 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 22 Dec 2009, 4:51 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Rochester man is sentenced to 28 years in prison for selling heroin in the Lafayette area.

43-year-old Paul Coffman pleaded guilty to dealing a narcotic and being a habitual substance offender.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Coffman's arrest stemmed from an October 2009 drug task force investigation.

"After the transaction, Coffman was giving investigators an interview," said Harrington. "He revealed he had 13 grams of heroin hidden on his body. Coffman pulled up his shirt and 13 bags of heroin dropped out from a roll of fat on his stomach."

Harrington said Coffman has five prior drug convictions and has cases pending in Wisconsin and Tippecanoe County.

December 22, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Heroin deal gets WL man 28 years

STAFF REPORTS

A West Lafayette man who was arrested during a heroin investigation by the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force was sentenced Tuesday to 28 years in prison.

Paul D. Coffman, 43, pleaded guilty Dec. 1 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to dealing a narcotic drug, a Class B felony, and to being a habitual substance offender.

He was accused of selling heroin to a confidential informant on Oct. 2. When Coffman was being interviewed by investigators, he admitted to having 13 grams of heroin on him, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Coffman has prior convictions for possession of marijuana in Kentucky and Indiana, along with a 2004 conviction in Tippecanoe County for possession of a controlled substance.

December 22, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dad pleads guilty to battery on son, 7

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces between six months and three years in prison for hitting his 7-year-old son, who has Down syndrome, and causing two black eyes.

Cesar Arenas, 30, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to battery on a child, a Class D felony. He will be sentenced Jan. 12 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Arenas was arrested by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office on Aug. 8 after someone reported a domestic disturbance at 2684 Priest Drive. Arenas, his wife and three children lived at that address.

Under questions posed by his attorney, Brian Dekker, Arenas admitted Monday that he tried to hit the back of his son's head because the boy wouldn't eat. The 7-year-old then turned his head, and Arenas instead struck the boy's face.

"You do understand that in Indiana, it's illegal to hit your child?" Dekker asked.

Arenas said he had gotten little sleep that day and didn't mean to injure the boy.

"I was angry. I was upset," he said. "I feel bad."

If Busch accepts Arenas' plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, an additional charge of battery on a disabled person, a Class D felony, would be dropped.

According to court documents, Arenas is suspected of being in the United States illegally. At the time his son was injured, Arenas was out on bond on charges of fraud and counterfeiting filed in May in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said those charges will be dismissed as part of Arenas' plea agreement because Arenas will be deported upon completion of his prison sentence.

December 19, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 50 years in molestation case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Stockwell man convicted of sexually abusing a young boy multiple times over a four-year period was sentenced Friday to 50 years in prison.

Larry R. Cox, 41, of Crawfordsville was found guilty in October of 15 counts of child molestation -- 10 Class A felonies and five Class C felonies -- after a two-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

He maintained his innocence during Friday's sentencing hearing.

"I understand everything that's going on," Cox told Judge Thomas Busch. "While I don't agree with the jury's decision, I'm willing to do any programs ... the court requires while I await my appeal."

Charges against Cox stemmed from an investigation last year by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. The victim told his cousin that he was repeatedly molested.

The cousin then told his mother, who contacted the boy's mom.

According to court documents and testimony during trial, Cox was an acquaintance of the victim's mom and would sometimes baby-sit. The boy, now 10 years old, said the sexual abuse began when he was 6 years old. He told investigators that Cox threatened to harm him if anyone found out.

During Friday's hearing, the boy's mother read a statement from her son, which asked that Cox receive life in prison so that other children won't be harmed.

The woman said her son has gone to counseling to help him cope.

"Anyone capable of hurting a child this way should not have the opportunity to do this again," she said.

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify the victims of sexual-based crimes or their family members.

Both Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman and the Tippecanoe County probation department recommended that Cox be sentenced to 120 years in prison.

All 15 counts in which Cox was convicted were separate incidents, meaning the sentence for each could have run consecutively. But Busch said he was restricted by Indiana Court of Appeals rulings that favor merging child molesting counts if all involve one victim.

Cox on Friday also was deemed a sexually violent offender, which means he will be listed on Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry for life.

The charges against Cox were of varying felonies based of the severity of the individual incidents. Allegations of child molestation in Indiana can range from fondling to sexual intercourse.

Cox's attorney, John Sorensen, told Busch that his client will appeal the convictions.

December 18, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

No bond for Benton Co. murder suspect

LAS VEGAS -- A Lafayette man charged with murder in the Nov. 27 shooting death of his girlfriend will be held without bond in a Nevada jail, pending extradition.

Steven R. Farrell, 57, appeared Thursday before Clark County District Court Judge Douglas Smith. It was Farrell's second court appearance since his arrest Dec. 9 in Mesquite, Nev.

His girlfriend, Christine R. Craig, 40, of West Lafayette, died of a single gunshot wound to her chest. The Benton County shooting took place on Craig and Farrell's intended wedding day and in front of Craig's 16-year-old daughter.

Farrell is fighting extradition. Indiana authorities have 90 days to obtain an extradition warrant. The Benton County prosecutor's office already has started paperwork to begin that process.

December 18, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen sentenced in BB gun shooting

A Lafayette teenager accused of firing a BB gun from a southside residence and striking a passerby has been sentenced to time served.

Ryan Cunningham, 19, pleaded guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to criminal recklessness, a Class D felony, in connection to a Sept. 17 incident at 2432 Euclid St.

That day, the Lafayette Police Department shut down some streets in the neighborhood across from Central Catholic Jr.-Sr. High School because investigators did not immediately know what type of weapon was involved.

Cunningham was sentenced Wednesday to 545 days in the Tippecanoe County Jail, but 365 days were suspended so long as Cunningham meets all terms of his probation.

A man struck on his arm by a BB declined medical treatment at the scene.

December 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Adult charges a possibility for teen in chase, crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A 15-year-old boy suspected of stealing a vehicle and causing a crash that seriously injured two people last week in downtown Lafayette could be tried as an adult.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed paperwork Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court, asking that the teenager be waived to adult court.

A hearing on the request will likely take place in January.

The allegations against the teenager stem from a series of incidents that began about 9:15 p.m. Dec. 10, when a Ford Expedition was stolen from the parking lot at Market Square Lanes, off Elmwood Avenue.

Officers with the Lafayette Police Department began chasing the sport utility vehicle on Greenbush Street and into downtown Lafayette, where it crashed at Third and Columbia streets into a Pontiac G6 driven by Damon A. Mathewson.

Mathewson, 31, of Lafayette, was released Tuesday from Home Hospital. His wife, Kinzie Mathewson, 28, suffered significant injuries. She remained Wednesday at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Jennifer Strempka, a spokeswoman for Clarian Health Partners, which operates Methodist, said nurses were listing Kinzie Mathewson as stable. A more specific condition, such as serious or critical, was not available Wednesday night.

The Journal & Courier is not naming the 15-year-old because formal charges have not yet been filed. His

passenger, a 14-year-old Lafayette boy, is being tried as a juvenile for his alleged participation.

Both teens have been held at Hamilton County Juvenile Detention Center for the past week.

The waiver request, signed by Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Hagen, argues that the 15-year-old's "repetitive pattern of delinquent acts" and the teen himself are beyond rehabilitation available through the juvenile justice system.

Specific examples were not identified.

He faces numerous felonies -- among them, auto theft, resisting law enforcement and criminal recklessness -- if charged as an adult.

Investigators, meanwhile, are still trying to piece together details of the pursuit and subsequent crash.

Sgt. Max Smith, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's traffic division, said they were able to recover a crash data recorder -- a device in vehicles that activates airbags -- from the Pontiac.

It showed that Damon Mathewson was driving 27 mph at the time of impact.

A crash data recorder from the Expedition could not be recovered.

But investigators are hoping to get surveillance video from the Halleck Federal Building at Third and Ferry streets, which the Expedition and two Lafayette patrol cars involved in the pursuit passed, Smith said.

They've already reviewed surveillance video from the building that houses Skylight Coffeehouse, on Third Street across from the Tippecanoe County Courthouse.

Smith said investigators have an idea of how fast the Expedition was going when it crashed. He declined to comment further until the investigation is complete.

Chief Don Roush said the department's pursuit policy currently is being reviewed to determine whether any changes should be made. Lafayette officers have discretion on when to initiate or end any chase.

Roush expects to release the department's findings in the coming days.

Additional Facts

Check out these videos

Links are provided to view surveillance video of the stolen vehicle and two Lafayette police vehicles involved in the Dec. 10 pursuit into downtown Lafayette.

One video shows the vehicles as they pass Chumley's, a restaurant on North Third Street, across from the Tippecanoe County Courthouse.

The other video shows the vehicles as they pass Adelino's, a restaurant on the same block.

Each video is about five minutes long, beginning shortly before the stolen vehicle passes by.

December 17, 2009: WLFI TV

15-year-old may be sent to adult court

Updated: Thursday, 17 Dec 2009, 10:56 AM EST
Published : Wednesday, 16 Dec 2009, 6:16 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County prosecutors have asked a judge to waive a teenager into adult court for his involvement in a police pursuit and crash last week.

(Read original story.)

Court documents stated 15-year-old Levi Saltsman could face seven criminal counts, including auto theft, resisting law enforcement, and criminal recklessness.

Deputy Prosecutor Charles Hagen said Saltsman and a 14-year-old boy stole an SUV and led police on a pursuit through downtown Lafayette last Thursday night.

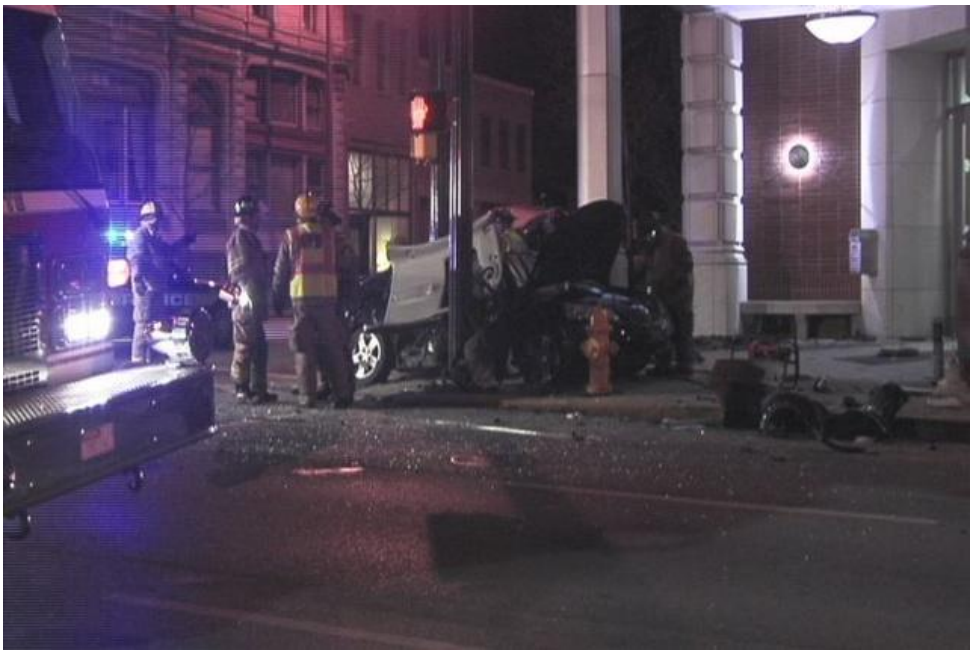
Lafayette Police said Saltsman then crashed the stolen vehicle into another car in front of the County Office Building.

Damon and Kenzi Mathewson of Lafayette were both critically injured in the crash.

A motion filed by the prosecutor's office said Saltsman's actions are "part of a pattern of delinquent acts, and he is beyond rehabilitation under the juvenile justice system." The document also states that the acts alleged are part of a repetitive pattern of delinquent acts.

A hearing on the waiver is scheduled for January 12th in Tippecanoe Superior Court 3.

Hagen said the 14-year-old boy is charged with auto theft, trespass and other juvenile offenses. The prosecutor's office is not seeking to waive him into adult court. His case will be handled by Juvenile Court Judge Loretta Rush.



December 16, 2009: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

3 charged after Battle Ground meth bust

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Battle Ground man allowed two people to make methamphetamine at his rural Tippecanoe County property in exchange for money, court documents allege.

All three people - the homeowner, Leslie A. Mantle, 46, and Andrew J. Humphreys, 32, of Lafayette and Adam R. Williams, 31, of West Point - were charged today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with conspiracy to manufacture meth, a Class B felony.

Multiple law enforcement agencies dismantled an active meth lab found on Mantle's property at 7533 Harrison Road in Battle Ground last Friday.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the investigation into Humphreys was initiated Dec. 10 by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit.

That afternoon and evening, plain-clothes officers trailed Humphreys and Williams to several Lafayette-area pharmacies, grocery stores and businesses.

Pharmacy logs showed that Humphreys bought several packages of medicine containing pseudoephedrine, a common ingredient used to make meth.

In Indiana, the logs must be signed by anyone purchasing medicine that has pseudoephedrine or ephedrine.

Officers then trailed Humphreys and Williams to Mantle's property, where people were seen going back and forth from a house and a pole barn there.

Mantle and Humphreys were each being held today in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $100,000 surety bond. Humphreys has an additional no-bond hold for allegedly violating parole for a prior robbery conviction.

Sheriff Tracy Brown said Williams had not been arrested as of late today. A warrant was issued for his arrest.

December 16, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Adult charges possible for teen in chase, crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A 15-year-old boy suspected of stealing a vehicle and causing a crash that seriously injured two people last week in downtown Lafayette could be tried as an adult.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed paperwork Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court, asking that the teenager be waived to adult court.

A hearing on the request will likely take place in January.

The allegations against the teenager stem from a series of incidents that began about 9:15 p.m. Dec. 10, when a Ford Expedition was stolen from the parking lot at Market Square Lanes, off Elmwood Avenue.

Officers with the Lafayette Police Department began chasing the sport utility vehicle on Greenbush Street and into downtown Lafayette, where it crashed at Third and Columbia streets into a Pontiac G6 driven by Damon A. Mathewson.

Mathewson, 31, of Lafayette, was released Tuesday from Home Hospital. His wife, Kinzie Mathewson, 28, suffered significant injuries. She remained Wednesday at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Jennifer Strempka, a spokeswoman for Clarian Health Partners, which operates Methodist, said nurses were listing Kinzie Mathewson as stable. A more specific condition, such as serious or critical, was not available Wednesday

night.

The Journal & Courier is not naming the 15-year-old because formal charges have not yet been filed. His passenger, a 14-year-old Lafayette boy, is being tried as a juvenile for his alleged participation.

Both teens have been held at Hamilton County Juvenile Detention Center for the past week.

The waiver request, signed by Deputy Prosecutor Chuck Hagen, argues that the 15-year-old's "repetitive pattern of delinquent acts" and the teen himself are beyond rehabilitation available through the juvenile justice system.

Specific examples were not identified.

He faces numerous felonies - among them, auto theft, resisting law enforcement and criminal recklessness - if charged as an adult.

Investigators, meanwhile, are still trying to piece together details of the pursuit and subsequent crash.

Sgt. Max Smith, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's traffic division, said they were able to recover a crash data recorder - a device in vehicles that activates airbags - from the Pontiac.

It showed that Damon Mathewson was driving 27 mph at the time of impact.

A crash data recorder from the Expedition could not be recovered.

But investigators are hoping to get surveillance video from the Halleck Federal Building at Third and Ferry streets, which the Expedition and two Lafayette patrol cars involved in the pursuit passed, Smith said.

They've already reviewed surveillance video from the building that houses Skylight Coffeehouse, on Third Street across from the Tippecanoe County Courthouse.

Smith said investigators have an idea of how fast the Expedition was going when it crashed. He declined to comment further until the investigation is complete.

Chief Don Roush said the department's pursuit policy currently is being reviewed to determine whether any changes should be made. Lafayette officers have discretion on when to initiate or end any chase.

Roush expects to release the department's findings in the coming days.

December 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man sentenced to 6 years for sex with teen

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced this morning to six years in prison for having a sexual relationship with a teenager in his care, beginning when the girl was 15 years old.

Eddy W. Ramey Sr., 43, pleaded guilty in October in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to five counts of child seduction. Each count is a Class D felony.

He had known the girl since she was 6 years old, according to information presented during today's sentencing hearing.

"We talked about it, and it just happened," Ramey said. "I'm sorry about it. I feel bad. I feel bad for her and my family that I hurt.

" ... I can't take back what I've done. I don't like what I've done."

The charges against him stemmed from an investigation in April by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. The girl's grandmother reported "ongoing sexual contact" between the teen and Ramey.

He was in a position of trust over the girl for several years.

According to court documents, she told an investigator that their relationship began with tickling and wrestling. It later progressed to fondling and other sexual activity.

Ramey's attorney, Carl Sandy, described the incidents as "voluntary but illegal."

But Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman disagreed. She pointed out that the teen has an IQ of 81 and took special education classes through the Lafayette School Corp.

Judge Randy Williams also ordered Ramey to serve one year on house arrest and six months on supervised probation after his release.

"I'm a father, and I don't get it," Williams said, noting that he has coached girls ages 14 to 15 - some of whom he has known since they were 6 years.

"I just don't get this."

December 8, 2009: WLFI TV

Guilty plea expected
Former student will plead in off-campus shooting

Updated: Tuesday, 08 Dec 2009, 3:01 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 08 Dec 2009, 12:42 AM EST

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A former Purdue student is expected to plead guilty to a fatal shooting.

William Calderon was arrested after 21-year-old Landon Siela was killed in August in an off-campus apartment near Purdue.

Court documents said Calderon and his roommate, 22-year-old Cory Lynch, had been drinking and playing with an Airsoft gun.

The men said they just wanted to scare Siela, but the real weapon Lynch was holding went off, hitting Siela in the neck.

Calderon is charged with false informing and pointing an unloaded firearm.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington says Calderon's case is now scheduled for a guilty plea on January 11th in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5. Lynch is charged with Reckless Homicide. His trial is scheduled for February.

December 8, 2009: WLFI TV

Mother sentenced to prison
Vivian Hampton

Updated: Tuesday, 08 Dec 2009, 4:40 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 08 Dec 2009, 3:13 PM EST

- Sue Scott

Lafayette, IN (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman who was found passed out drunk with her one year old daughter is going to prison.

It was Vivian Hampton's second conviction for Neglect of a Dependent.

A judge sentenced the 30-year-old woman to three years in prison, followed by 2 years on probation. Hampton pleaded guilty to Neglect of a Dependent.

Police said Hampton was found in April behind a house on Burroughs Street. Detective Mark Pinkard said a witness called 911 when he saw the woman walking behind his house.

"The female dropped the child a couple of times, while he was on the phone to our dispatchers," said Pinkard. "Within seconds our officers arrived on the scene and discovered the female passed out in his backyard and the child. It was a very young child, crawling around with very few clothes on. It was cold and damp."

Detective Pinkard said the child suffered minor injuries and was placed in foster care.

Court documents said a baby stroller was found nearby with a half-empty bottle of vodka.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman says Hampton's parental rights to a 5-year-old son were terminated after her 2005 conviction of Neglect Resulting in Bodily Injury.

December 7, 2009: WLFI TV

Mom charged: Attempted murder of son
Son not breathing, may be taken off life support

Updated: Monday, 07 Dec 2009, 5:41 PM EST
Published : Monday, 07 Dec 2009, 3:12 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman has been charged for attempted murder of her 3-year-old son.

On November 28, Lafayette Police officers found 23-year-old Senora Wheeler lying on top of the child, Melvin Moon Jr., under a tree off Union Street near Earl Avenue. Court records state Wheeler's three other children were with her and the boy under the tree that night, and that they were found huddled against their mother.

Court documents also stated the officers found the boy face down and without a pulse.

The 3-year-old was taken to St. Vincent's Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.

Court documents said Melvin Moon Jr. is not breathing on his own, and doctors are recommending that life support be withdrawn.

Wheeler sobbed in front of Magistrate Norris Wang. She told the judge she doesn't know what happened.

"My memory is lost. I didn't take my medicine. You've got to believe me," said Wheeler

Magistrate Wang had to tell Wheeler to calm down because she was so emotional. Wheeler asked to get out of jail.

"I'm in a hole. I want to be out in the free world," said Wheeler. "I've got mental issues. Please let me go back to Wabash Valley."

The judge ordered Wheeler to be evaluated. Her bond remains at $100,000.

Wheeler was also charged with felony neglect of a dependent, and battery on a law enforcement officer.

The probable cause affidavit said Wheeler was combative during her arrest, and kicked one Lafayette Police officer in the face.

Wheeler has a preliminary trial date scheduled in March.

December 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Neglect charges land woman in prison for 3 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman who was found passed out and intoxicated in an alley in April, her toddler-aged daughter nearby, was sentenced today to three years in prison.

Vivian E. Hampton, 30, pleaded guilty in October in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony.

She pleaded guilty and was convicted in 2005 for the same offense, that time for injuries suffered by her then 5-year-old. It was brought up repeatedly during today's sentencing hearing.

"You said your son was more precious than your own life. You remember that?" Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said. "Yet here we are again. ... Same defendant. Same situation."

The most recent charges against Hampton came after someone on Burroughs Street in Lafayette called 911 on April 22, 2009, reporting that a woman walking behind his home appeared impaired.

He said the woman, later identified as Hampton, was carrying a baby, whom she allegedly dropped several times, according to court documents.

When a Lafayette police officer arrived, Hampton was passed out. Her then 17-month-old daughter was covered in mud and found crawling nearby.

The girl was wearing a dress but had no socks, shoes or a coat - though the temperature was in the upper 30s at the time. The officer borrowed a blanket from a neighbor to cover the girl, Zeman said.

Hampton admitted today to being an alcoholic. She began attending Alcoholics Anonymous and received counseling after the incident involving her son.

Zeman said Hampton was accused then of getting drunk and hitting the boy on his head with a pipe.

Hampton told Busch that she stayed clean and sober for nearly four years. But a series of incidents - beginning with getting laid off a year ago and the suicide of her daughter's father earlier this year - caused Hampton to relapse.

The morning of April 22, she drank five shots of vodka and argued with her boyfriend. Her last memories that day were leaving for her parents' home and stopping somewhere near 13th Street.

"I just know that I've done wrong, and I have no one to blame but myself," Hampton said. "... I made an unwise decision to drink, which led to irresponsible choices that night. I am deeply ashamed."

Busch ordered Hampton to serve two years on supervised probation after her release from prison, during which time she must apply to admittance to Home with Hope in Lafayette.

The girl, now 2 years old, currently is in foster care. Hampton is due in court Friday to learn whether her parental rights will be granted or terminated.

Her parental rights for the boy were terminated in 2007.

"I know I can be a good parent," she said. "I've got a plan if I do get released."

She said that plan includes attending counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, and finding a sponsor to help keep her clean and sober.

December 7, 2009: WLFI TV

Lampitok appears in court

Updated: Monday, 07 Dec 2009, 6:04 PM EST
Published : Monday, 07 Dec 2009, 5:57 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A man accused of firing shots at a jogger in September is back in Tippecanoe County.

50-year-old Ronald Lampitok appeared before a judge to face several charges including being a serious felon in possession of a firearm.

Lampitok was arrested in Coles County, Illinois last month and was recently extradited to Lafayette.

He asked the judge to send him back to a state prison while he awaits trial. He has hired an attorney from Lebanon to represent him.

Lampitok is accused of firing two shots on Grove Street in Lafayette on September 10th.

Court records said three weeks before the shooting, Lampitok was released from the Indiana State Prison where he'd served time for carjacking and robbery.

He has prior convictions for manufacturing or delivering cocaine, escape, and assault with a deadly weapon.

He was ordered to be held without bond.

December 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Noncitizen pleads guilty to molesting

A Lafayette man faces between six and 20 years in prison for having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl.

Jose Refugio Puentes-Robledo, 25, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to child molesting, a Class B felony.

He will be sentenced Jan. 27 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Puentes-Robledo was arrested and charged in March, shortly after the girl's parents reported her as a runaway. The two were acquaintances.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Puentes-Robledo's plea agreements call for six to 10 years of sentence be served in prison.

Puentes-Robledo, who is not a U.S. citizen, also faces possible deportation after his release.

December 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Another sentenced for role in home invasions

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to eight years in prison for his role in a residential armed robbery in April in which two people were bound with duct tape.

Randall C. Belmont Jr., 26, pleaded guilty in November to robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony.

On Friday, Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court also ordered that Belmont serve one year each on community corrections and probation after his release.

His family members wept when the sentence was handed down.

"It doesn't bother me to send you to prison. But it does bother me because of your father and his needs," Daniel told Belmont. "I can tell that it hurts him, and it hurts me to see that."

Belmont was one of several Lafayette-area men charged in connection to a series of drug-related home invasions this past March, April and May.

Detectives from Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County collaborated on the investigation because of similarities in the crimes.

The robbery to which Belmont pleaded guilty occurred on April 10 at a home on Indiana 26 West, just outside West Lafayette.

According to court documents, four suspects -- some carrying toy firearms that appeared real and a baseball bat -- forced their way inside and bound a man and woman with duct tape.

A video game system, a laptop and the woman's purse were among the items taken.

Under Belmont's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, he must provide a cleanup statement to police and take a polygraph test, if needed.

Belmont's attorney, Kimberly Robinson, and Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss both said that Belmont was cooperative with law enforcement during the investigation. He received a combined 428 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

Nearly all co-defendants in the residential armed robberies have pleaded guilty or pleaded and were sentenced.

One of them, Dayna Alvarez, 25, pleaded guilty Friday morning in Circuit Court to attempted armed robbery. He will be sentenced Jan. 22.

December 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Downtown stabber gets 15 years, welcomes time in prison to reflect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A homeless man who stabbed another homeless man during an unprovoked and random attack in August near downtown Lafayette was sentenced Friday to 15 years in prison.

Bruce L. McClimans, 32, pleaded guilty in November in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to battery by means of a deadly weapon and intimidation on a law enforcement officer. Both counts were felonies.

He also admitted to being a habitual offender.

McClimans' attorney, Michael Trueblood, told Judge Thomas Busch that his client has "discovered his spiritual side" while in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

McClimans -- whose lengthy criminal history dates to 1993 and includes convictions for battery, auto theft and resisting law enforcement -- hopes to leave prison with a clean slate.

"I've did a lot of things wrong in my life," he told the judge. "I want to do everything I can in prison to start acting like a man and get right with the Lord.

"... I think it will really help me to do some time."

McClimans admitted to stabbing Norman Smith Jr., 53, in the chest on Aug. 25 as Smith was walking on South Sixth Street. The attack was about two blocks from the Lafayette Police Department.

Smith was treated at Home Hospital and released later that day.

Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich said McClimans didn't know Smith. She said Smith had planned to attend Friday's hearing but for unknown reasons did not show.

McClimans gave no explanation as to why he stabbed Smith.

The intimidation charge to which McClimans pleaded stemmed from an arrest in June. Goodrich said McClimans threatened to kill two Lafayette police officers and their families.

That incident, originally filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5, was combined with the stabbing charges filed in Superior Court 2.

McClimans received a combined 224 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

December 4, 2009: WLFI TV

Peedin appears in court
Former student appears for campus fires

Updated: Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 1:33 PM EST
Published : Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 11:47 AM EST

- Joe LePage

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The now former Purdue student who allegedly started two fires at Elliott Hall of Music made an initial court appearance in Tippecanoe County.

Isaiah Peedin appeared before Judge Norris Wang in Magistrate Court on Friday, December 4th. Peedin waived the reading of his rights.

He will be back in court again on January 8th, 2010.

His attorney, Bruce Graham said despite the charges, his client is not a bad person.

"As you can tell he's a great kid, from a great family," said Graham. "A volunteer, missionary, never been in a lick of trouble before in his life. And, in the instant case, you can tell by the probable cause affidavit, there was absolutely no intent that anybody be placed in danger. An accurate reading of it is nobody was placed in danger."

On October 19th a fire at Elliott Hall of Music disrupted a test.

A volunteer with the Purdue student safety patrol officer at the time, Peedin first gave a description of the person who started the fire.

He allegedly confessed the next day.

December 4, 2009: WLFI TV

Former Klondike teacher in court
James Page makes initial appearance

Updated: Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 12:09 PM EST

Published : Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 12:06 PM EST

Joe LePage

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Former Klondike Middle School teacher James Page will be back in court January 8th, 2010. He made his initial appearance Friday, December 4th.

The former health and wellness teacher was arrested on September 12 th after several marijuana plants were found growing in the basement of a house on Old US 231.

Some paraphernalia was found, including a one-hitter box and a pipe

Page's alleged accomplice, Samuel Patterson also made an appearance.

He too will be in court on January 8th of 2010.

Page and Patterson each face one count of Possession of Marijuana.

December 4, 2009: WLFI TV

Mother accused of smothering toddler
Toddler still in critical condition

Updated: Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 1:55 PM EST
Published : Friday, 04 Dec 2009, 10:38 AM EST

- Ava Wilhite

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A mother accused of smothering and injuring her three-year-old child appeared before magistrate Noris Wang at the Tippecanoe County Jail on Thursday.

On Saturday morning, when reaching the scene, police believed one adult and three children were present. They then realized the adult woman was laying on top of a fourth child.

3-year-old Melvin Moon Jr. was found underneath his mother, 23-year old Senora Wheeler. The pair, along with three other children, were hidden in in a bush behind the Family Video at the corner of Union Street and Earl Street.

According to the affidavit of probable cause filed in the case, LaTrece Thomas, Wheeler's friend, said Wheeler was driving a car with the children when she stopped it and told the children to get out and take their shoes off.

The affidavit also stated that Wheeler's 6-year-old daughter said that Wheeler choked Melvin with both hands while the group was outside, because the boy was screaming. According to the affidavit, the daughter said she asked Wheeler to stop choking Melvin but Wheeler refused to do so.

Sergeant Scott McCoy said the boy was unresponsive and went into cardiac arrest for 45 minutes. The child was taken to Home Hospital with a body temperature of 91 degrees then airlifted to St. Vincent's Children Hospital in Indianapolis.

Wheeler was issued preliminary charges of battery resulting in bodily injury, battery, resisting arrest, and two counts of neglect.

"She just wasn't responding to officers. She was aware of what was happening and her surroundings and that type of thing. She just wasn't responding to the officers. It took a little bit of effort to get her from under the tree. At that point she was placed, basically, in hand cuffs for our protection and her own protection," said Sergeant McCoy.

Neighbors said they rarely saw Wheeler or her children outside their house.

"She kinda had little issues though. I don't know if she would hurt her child. Basically her kids didn't really talk too much and to me it seems like something was worrying them. But I don't know what was really going on," said Erica Booth.

The boy remains in critical condition in an Indianapolis hospital.

A public defender was appointed to represent Wheeler.

The Magistrate signed a no contact order for six people.

Wheeler cannot communicate with her children and some witnesses. The prosecutor's office has until Monday to file formal charges in the case.

Wheeler's bond is set at $100,000.

When the magistrate read Senora Wheeler her rights, she began to cry and asked how long she would be in jail.

Wheeler then asked if she could be ordered back to Wabash Valley Hospital for treatment.

She was placed at the hospital Saturday morning and was held there until Wednesday.

Wheeler is now being held at the Tippecanoe County Jail.

December 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 8 years for role in home invasions

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man was sentenced this morning to eight years in prison for his role in a residential armed robbery in April in which two people were bound with duct tape.

Randall C. Belmont Jr., 26, pleaded guilty in November to robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony.

Today, Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court also ordered that Belmont serve one year each on community corrections and probation after his release.

His family members wept when the sentence was handed down.

"It doesn't bother me to send you to prison. But it does bother me because of your father and his needs," Daniel told Belmont. "I can tell that it hurts him, and it hurts me to see that."

Belmont was one of several Lafayette-area men charged in connection to a series of drug-related home invasions this past March, April and May.

Detectives from Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County collaborated on the investigation because of similarities in the crimes.

The robbery to which Belmont pleaded guilty occurred on April 10 at a home on Indiana 26 West, just outside West Lafayette.

According to court documents, four suspects - some carrying toy firearms that appeared real and a baseball bat - forced their way inside and bound a man and woman with duct tape.

A video game system, a laptop and the woman's purse were among the items taken.

Under Belmont's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, he must provide a cleanup statement to police and take a polygraph test, if needed.

Belmont's attorney, Kimberly Robinson, and Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss both said that Belmont was cooperative with law enforcement during the investigation.

He received a combined 428 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

Nearly all co-defendants in the residential armed robberies have pleaded guilty or pleaded and were sentenced. One of them, Dayna Alvarez, 25, pleaded guilty this morning in Circuit Court to attempted armed robbery. He will be sentenced Jan. 22.

December 3, 2009: WLFI TV

Help prevent gangs in Tippecanoe County

Updated: Thursday, 03 Dec 2009, 2:48 PM EST
Published : Thursday, 03 Dec 2009, 2:38 PM EST

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - North-central Indiana is living on borrowed time when it comes to gang activity.

If proper steps aren't taken, the number of gangs and gang members will sky-rocket.

Tippecanoe County District Attorney Pat Harrington said gang numbers continue to increase in popularity in area schools.

"In the period of May through July we had seven shots fired. If they had been accurate in shooting, we would have had seven homicides. All related to gangs, drugs and guns," said Harrington.

Harrington is "Training the Trainers," showing principals how to tell if students in their schools are affiliated with gangs. The idea is for the message to then go to teachers, to parents, to fellow students.

There are the five gangs the county said have the biggest presence on area streets. Some gang signs are easy to pick out, like tattoos. Others are more difficult, like gang colors. They blend in with local school colors: blue and white, black and red - even Boilermaker colors, black and gold.

Harrington says gang activity is nothing new to Tippecanoe County, but the growing popularity is. That was news to Wainwright Middle School Principal Neal McCutcheon.

"Kind of paints the picture of what's happening in Tippecanoe County and makes me more aware of what may be happening in the southeast corner and what is going on with my neighboring schools," said McCutcheon.

McCutcheon says the time for complacency is over.

"If you don't see it and if you do not feel it, you are not impacted by it. But it is here, and we need to open our eyes and take a hard look at what we are doing," said McCutcheon.

Harrington and his staff said you the biggest thing teachers, administrators, students and parents can do is call the anonymous We-Tip Hotline if they see any suspicious gang activity. As Harrington said: if something doesn't get done now, the problem will only get worse.

Tippecanoe County Project Safe Neighborhoods released the following YouTube video to educate the community.

Click on link to view video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCOTD77Bpo4

December 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL man pleads guilty to molesting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man faces between 30 and 35 years in prison for having sexual contact with a 5-year-old girl.

Karl J. Griffin, 29, pleaded guilty Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to attempted child molesting, a Class A felony. He will be sentenced Jan. 8 by Judge Randy Williams.

Charges were filed against Griffin a year ago after the girl told a baby-sitter about the alleged molestation. The baby-sitter then contacted the Indiana Department of Child Services.

A Class A felony typically is punishable by between 20 and 50 years in prison. Griffin's expected sentence was included in a plea agreement he signed with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

November 25, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Police say attempted carjacking, robbery led to I-65 shots

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Numerous shots that were fired early Sunday at a vehicle on Interstate 65 in Tippecanoe County stemmed from an attempted robbery and carjacking plan, court documents allege.

Criminal charges were filed Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 against two of the teenage suspects, Carlos Coyuchi-Antonio, 18, and Luis Angel Rosas-Najera, 16.

A third suspect, a 15-year-old male, will be tried in juvenile court, said Sgt. Jeromy Rainey, a detective with the Lafayette Police Department.

All three are from Indianapolis.

No one in the other vehicle -- a Ford Expedition driven by Ernesto Arteaga, 24, of Lafayette -- was injured.

Rainey said it appears the victims were randomly targeted and did not know any of the teenage suspects.

The incident ended about 5 a.m. Sunday on Greenbush Street in Lafayette, where the teenagers were stopped by police.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Coyuchi-Antonio, Rosas-Najera and the 15-year-old are suspected of tailing Arteaga's SUV to Lafayette from Indianapolis -- where Arteaga and a female passenger went to dinner and a nightclub Saturday night.

The three teenagers reportedly were driving around Indianapolis when they spotted Arteaga's Expedition and decided to rob a "rich couple."

They're accused of trying to run the Expedition off the road and later firing shots at it to get Arteaga to stop. This allegedly occurred because an SUV driven by Coyuchi-Antonio was getting low on fuel.

The first shots were fired on I-65 near the Indiana 38 exit by Dayton.

Rainey said investigators are still trying to determine how many rounds were fired. He said four distinct bullet entries or marks were found on the Expedition.

A .25-caliber semi-automatic handgun and an empty magazine were found in the SUV driven by Coyuchi-Antonio.

Coyuchi-Antonio and Rosas-Najera each are charged with conspiracy to commit robbery; attempted robbery; attempted carjacking; and two counts of criminal recklessness. All counts are felonies.

They also are charged with a misdemeanor count of carrying a handgun without a license. Coyuchi-Antonio has an additional charge of operating a vehicle while never receiving a license.

The teenagers appeared for their initial hearings Tuesday before Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams. A Spanish-language interpreter was brought in to assist them.

Coyuchi-Antonio and Rosas-Najera are each being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond. Lafayette police Capt. Bruce Biggs said the 15-year-old was released Sunday to his parents.

November 25, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets 3 years in motel room heist

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette woman was sentenced Tuesday to three years in prison for taking part in an armed robbery in February at a Lafayette motel.

Dawnita Messer-Willis, 26, was one of four people charged.

The group was accused of threatening two men with a baseball bat at Knights Inn and demanding their wallets and cash.

Messer-Willis pleaded guilty in July in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to aiding, inducing or causing robbery, a Class C felony; and operating a vehicle while intoxicated, a Class A misdemeanor.

About $2,000 was taken in the robbery.

All four suspects -- Messer-Willis, Evelyn C. Walker, 26, Robert D. Gaston, 19, and Tabbatha A. Willis, 25 -- were arrested within minutes when Lafayette police stopped their vehicle on Creasy Lane.

Some of the victim's money was found on them and inside the vehicle.

According to court documents, Messer-Willis and Willis, who are sisters, had been drinking with the victims at a Lafayette bar on Feb. 27.

They then went to a room at Knights Inn, where the robbery occurred.

The sisters left the room shortly before Walker and Gaston walked in, armed with a baseball bat.

Messer-Willis also was sentenced Tuesday to three years on community corrections and one year on supervised probation. Her sister is the sole defendant waiting to be sentenced.

All four suspects pleaded guilty.

Gaston is serving a five-year sentence, and Walker is serving a seven-year sentence.

November 25, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lottery theft unlucky for habitual offender

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man who broke into a gas station after business hours and stole an entire display of lottery tickets was sentenced Tuesday to six years in prison.

Lucian W. Dyer, 46, pleaded guilty earlier this month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to burglary, a Class C felony, and to being a habitual offender.

Some of the winning Hoosier Lotto scratch-off tickets were cashed.

Criminal charges against Dyer stemmed from a string of thefts this past May at Village Pantry on Main Street, at a Lafayette church and at Shell gas station on Teal Road.

Combined, hundreds of lottery tickets and a woman's purse were taken.

Through Dyer's plea with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Dyer admitted to breaking into the Shell gas station.

The Lafayette Police Department was able to identify Dyer as a suspect partially from information from employees at Village Pantry. They recognized Dyer as a frequent customer.

According to court documents, Dyer told investigators that he recently was laid off and needed money because he was the sole provider for his girlfriend and her daughter.

Investigators who searched Dyer's apartment found hundreds of scratch-off lottery tickets in his bedroom closet and a dresser drawer.

The habitual offender sentencing enhancement stemmed from prior, unrelated arrests. At the time of his arrest in May, Dyer was on probation for convictions in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

November 24, 2009: WLFI TV

Gunshots at car: Attempted carjacking?

Incident took place last Sunday morning

Updated: Tuesday, 24 Nov 2009, 5:39 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 24 Nov 2009, 4:44 PM EST

- Erin Coduti
- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Two men are accused of an attempted carjacking along Interstate 65.

Carlos Coyuchi-Antonio and Luis Angel Rosas-Najera face charges of conspiracy to commit robbery, attempted carjacking, and other counts stemming from an incident Sunday morning. Coyuchi-Antonio was also charged with operating a motor vehicle while never receiving a license.

A juvenile who accompanied the pair was also taken into custody.

According to court records, Coyuchi-Antonio and Rosas-Najera admitted to police they followed and planned to rob a couple who left an Indianapolis club.

Police said the couple told them that the men waved a gun at them and fired shots into their vehicle, trying to get them to pull over.

According to the affidavit, the juvenile who had been riding with Coyuchi-Antonio and Rosas-Najera told police that the original plan had been to wait until the victims' SUV had stopped, whereupon Rosas-Najera would approach the vehicle and hold his gun to the driver's head and attempt to steal the SUV.

According to the affidavit, the juvenile said the plan changed when they realized their own vehicle was low on gas. Police said the juvenile told them Coyuchi-Antonio then tried to force the victims' vehicle off the road, then pointed the gun at them and fired shots at the vehicle when they did not stop.

Court records state that the male victim told police that he believed six or seven shots were fired at his vehicle.

Records state that a police officer observed the following on the victims' vehicle:

- Two dents in the rear driver's side door that were consistent with gunfire
- A single hole in the driver's side door consistent with a bullet hole
- The driver's side tire was flat, and had a hole in it.

After the woman in the car called 911, police stopped the suspects' vehicle in Lafayette.

Court records state that a .25 caliber gun was retrieved from the suspects' vehicle.

Police mugshot: Carlos Coyuchi-Antonio

Police mugshot: Luis Rosas-Najera

November 20, 2009: WLFI TV

Student accused of terroristic mischief
21-year-old Roy C. Sun faces preliminary charges

Updated: Friday, 20 Nov 2009, 3:11 PM EST
Published : Friday, 20 Nov 2009, 11:36 AM EST

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Purdue police arrested 21-year-old Purdue student Roy C. Sun Wednesday on preliminary charges of terroristic mischief and possession of stolen property.

Purdue Parking Services had placed a wheel lock on Sun's vehicle on Tuesday because the vehicle allegedly displayed a parking permit that did not belong to Sun.

A wheel lock, a parking ticket, and $20 were left in a box in the hallway in the Visitor Information Center at about 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday. This building also houses Parking Services.

A Purdue news release described the box as "suspicious."

The Visitor Information Center was evacuated.

Police used a portable X-ray machine to identify the box's contents.

People were allowed back into the building at about 9:00 a.m.

Detective Sgt. Matt Rosenbarger said that "terroristic mischief" is when a person knowingly or intentionally places a device with intent to cause a reasonable person to believe that it is a weapon of mass destruction.

The charge for terroristic mischief in this case is a Class C felony, punishable by up to eight years in prison and a fine of $10,000. Posession of stolen property is a Class D felony, which is punishable by up to three years in prison and a maximum fine of $10,000.

Sun was taken to the Tippecanoe County Jail.

November 20, 2009: WLFI TV

Driver pleads guilty in student's death
Joseph Welch could face up to 20 years in prison

Updated: Friday, 20 Nov 2009, 4:17 PM EST
Published : Friday, 20 Nov 2009, 4:13 PM EST

- Adam Hall

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces up to 20 years in prison for his role in a two-vehicle crash that left a Harrison High School student dead.

30-year-old Joseph Welch pleaded guilty to operating a vehicle while intoxicated resulting in death.

16-year-old Katherine Ann Baker was killed when Welch ran a stoplight on US 52 and collided with her car in November, 2008.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington says the guilty plea represents a good resolution to the case.

But West Central Indiana Mothers Against Drunk Driving president Dan Towery says despite the plea nothing will lessen the pain felt by Baker's family.

"We're pleased with the fact that the defendant pled guilty to the lead charge. The lead charge is the most serious offense so in this case it is a good resolution of the case," said Harrington.

"There is no good resolution. Kate's gone. People have to be held accountable...so I think his plea agreement, pleaing guilty is appropriate. He was guilty, and we'll see what happens at the sentencing hearing," said Towery.

Welch's sentencing is set for March 5. Welch has a previous conviction in Iowa for operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

November 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Safety officer charged with arson
Isaiah Peedin accused of starting fire at Elliott

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Nov 2009, 11:53 AM EST
Published : Tuesday, 17 Nov 2009, 11:18 AM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - The Tippecanoe prosecutor has charged a Purdue student safety patrol officer with arson.

22-year-old Isaiah Peedin is accused of starting two fires on October 19 at the Elliott Hall of Music.

Court documents said Peedin first told police he was on fire watch duty when he noticed flames coming from a basement bulletin board and saw a man drop a sock hat and lighter as he fled the scene.

Peedin was taken to the hospital and treated for smoke inhalation before he was interviewed by police.

The Affidavit of Probable Cause stated when police talked to Peedin the next day, he confessed to starting both fires. Peedin said he had panicked and realized he did not know how to use a fire extinguisher to put out the fire, so he ran out and told other people about the fire so they could get out of the building.

One Mathematics instructor told police 900 students were scheduled to take exams that evening when the fires started. Everyone was evacuated. No one was injured in the fire.

Peedin is charged with two counts of arson, perjury, and false informing.

November 13, 2009: WLFI TV

Credit card thief skips sentencing
Chicago man chose not to attend his sentencing

Updated: Friday, 13 Nov 2009, 7:53 PM EST
Published : Friday, 13 Nov 2009, 7:53 PM EST

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Chicago man chose not to attend his sentencing on charges of forgery, theft and being a habitual offender. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Levie Jackson waived his right to be present during his sentencing. A judge proceeded to sentence the 57-year-old to 45 years in prison.

Jackson was arrested earlier this year after he approached elderly people outside of a Lafayette shopping center saying he was a security guard offering coupons. He told victims he needed to see their I-D to prove they were over 65. He would steal their credit cards when they gave him their wallets.

Harrington said Jackson has 16 prior convictions. They include burglary, theft, and forgery. He said charges are pending against Jackson in three different Illinois counties

November 13, 2009: WLFI TV

Former teacher faces drug charges
James Page charged with Possession of Marijuana

Updated: Friday, 13 Nov 2009, 2:30 PM EST
Published : Friday, 13 Nov 2009, 10:33 AM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A former Klondike Middle School teacher and a friend face two counts of Possession of Marijuana.

James R. Page,61, and Samuel D. Patterson, 60, were arrested on September 12th after an Indiana State Police trooper spotted marijuana plants growing at a house near Old US 231. Page was a health and wellness teacher in the Tippecanoe School Corporation.

Court documents said Patterson was found with a pair of shears in his hand and appeared to be trimming the plants behind his house. Page was sitting on the steps behind the house. Patterson gave the officer permission to search the premises. According to police, several marijuana plants were found growing in the basement. IN the bedroom some paraphernalia was found, including a one-hitter box and a pipe. In the kitchen scales were located and two jars containing green plant material that field-tested positive for marijuana. In addition, about 35 marijuana plants were found being grown behind the house and in weeds to the sides of the residence. The officer also said there was an additional pile of marijuana plants beside a tree that appeared to have just been harvested. The officer said a shed was set up as a drying room.

The Affidavit of Probable Cause said Page was interviewed and stated he was aware that Patterson was growing marijuana at the residence, and admitted that he was helping Patterson. The report also states Page admitted that he used marijuana "recreationally" and also that his wife smoked marijuana occasionally. Page had a book in his car on growing marijuana.

Court documents said Paterson admitted he was growing the marijuana at his residence. Patterson said the he had obtained clippings from someone else's marijuana plants which were used for the growing operation.

Page was a health and wellness teacher at Klondike Middle School. He resigned last month. He had been with the Tippecanoe School Corporation for 39 years.

November 13, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man who stole credit cards sentenced to 45 years

STAFF REPORTS

A Chicago man found guilty of stealing credit cards and debit cards from people outside stores in Greater Lafayette was sentenced today to 45 years in prison.

Following a two-day trial last month, Levie S. Jackson, 57, was convicted by a jury in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 of six counts of forgery, a Class C felony, and seven counts of theft, a Class D felony.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Jackson is deemed a habitual offender. He has 31 prior arrests, resulting in 16 prior convictions.

And Harrington said Jackson still has charges pending in three Illinois counties.

"The sentence is appropriate given this man's lengthy criminal history. And what's particularly outrageous is how he was specifically targeting elderly couples," Harrington said.

Lafayette police said Jackson, who goes by the alias of "Maurice," was arrested in connection with seven scams that occurred between October 2006 and August 2007 outside "big box" retail stores, grocery stores and drug stores in Lafayette and West Lafayette.

In each instance, a man posing as the store manager contacted customers in parking lots and offered discount plans for senior citizens.

Investigators suspect credit cards and debit cards were stolen when the suspect asked to see a driver's license to verify the age of the person who had been approached.

The stolen cards were used to buy items that included cigarettes, gift cards and video games at gas stations, convenience stores and other businesses.

November 10, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea follows attack downtown

- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A homeless man faces between 12 and 18 years in prison for stabbing another homeless man during an apparently random and unprovoked attack in downtown Lafayette in August.

Bruce L. McClimans, 32, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony, and intimidation on a law enforcement officer, a Class D felony.

He also admitted to being a habitual offender.

McClimans is accused of stabbing Norman Smith Jr., 53, in the chest on Aug. 26 as Smith was walking on South

Sixth Street -- about two blocks from the Lafayette Police Department.

Smith was treated at Home Hospital and released the same day.

Investigators previously have said the two men were not friends or acquaintances and that the incident was not a targeted attack.

McClimans was later found and arrested at a friend's house on South Third Street.

He did not provide a motive behind a stabbing during Monday's hearing.

Under his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, all of McClimans' sentence must be served in the Indiana Department of Correction, Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich said.

The number of years must fall between 12 and 18 years in prison, though the exact term will be left up to Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch.

McClimans will be sentenced on Dec. 4.

According to court documents, he has prior convictions for battery on law enforcement, auto theft, resisting law enforcement and battery.

November 10, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL man admits to plot to steal drug money

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man faces between 12 and 22 years in prison for helping plan a series of drug-related, residential armed robberies earlier this year.

Charles Erik Moritz, 23, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery while armed with a deadly weapon. Each count is a Class B felony.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 14.

Moritz was one of seven Lafayette-area men suspected in home invasions that look place in March and April in Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County.

Detectives from those police agencies collaborated on the investigation because of similarities in the crimes.

The plan, Moritz admitted Monday, was to steal drug proceeds from known drug dealers in the Lafayette area. The group had looked up their targets' addresses online.

Toy firearms -- BB guns and Airsoft guns -- and baseball bats were used. In some instances, residents were tied up using duct tape or electrical cords and battered.

Moritz said he did not carry out any of the home invasions but admitted to helping plan them.

The robberies to which Moritz pleaded guilty took place March 9 at a residence at U.S. 231 South and Indiana 25 West; March 11 on South River Road; April 10 at a residence on Indiana 26 West; and April 18 on Vinton Street.

During the Vinton Street incident, the suspects initially went to the wrong address, according to court documents. Moritz admitted that the armed men then forced a female tenant to go with them to the original address.

The suspects fled after a gunshot was fired from a tenant there. No one was injured.

Under Moritz's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, his sentences for the two charges in which he pleaded must be served consecutively.

Two other co-defendants pleaded guilty and have been sentenced. Cases are pending against the remaining suspects.

November 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man admits to stabbing woman in face

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Tippecanoe County man faces between eight and 20 years incarceration for repeatedly stabbing a woman in the face three years ago.

David L. Evans, 40, pleaded guilty but mentally ill this afternoon in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to aggravated battery, a Class B felony - admitting that he used a screwdriver to attack Lisa Mills on July 24, 2006.

He is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 4 by Judge Don Daniel.

Evans' criminal case was delayed partly because of time he spent at Logansport State Hospital, which is a psychiatric facility. He suffers from mild mental retardation and schizophrenia, said his attorney, Steve Meyer.

Mills was attacked as she and Evans were sitting in her vehicle on Newsom Drive, off South 18th Street near County Road 350 South.

Under questions posed by Meyer, Evans said today that he and Mills used to live together. But the day of the attack, Mills had told him to move out of her home.

According to court documents, she drove Evans to an apartment on Columbia Street to drop off belongings. Evans then asked her to drive him to another location, and Mills agreed.

Evans admitted Friday to pulling out a screwdriver and stabbing Mills in various locations on her face, jaw and neck.

Mills managed to escape from Evans and drove to a nearby business for help.

If Daniel accepts Evans' plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the most serious charge against him - attempted murder - will be dropped.

Attempted murder is a Class A felony, punishable by 20 to 50 years incarceration.

Evans was released from Logansport State Hospital in January 2009. He's since been held in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

November 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-bookkeeper files guilty plea

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former bookkeeper for a Lafayette drywall and building supply company admitted Tuesday to taking about $700 from money she had deposited.

Brenda K. Youkey, 52, of Thorntown pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

She will be sentenced Jan. 13 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The charges against Youkey stemmed from thefts in October 2005 and February 2006.

Though charges were filed in August 2006, Youkey was not arrested until this past June.

Her attorney, Bruce Graham, said Youkey did not know criminal charges would be filed against her. He said she did not find out until her arrest four months ago.

Youkey had been working as a bookkeeper for Rose & Walker Supply, an Indiana business that has a location on U.S. 52 South in Lafayette.

She admitted during Tuesday's guilty plea hearing to "shorting" two deposits she made -- $233 on Oct. 15, 2005, and $478 on Feb. 2, 2006.

Deposits were a routine part of Youkey's job duties.

"I did not intend to keep the money, but I did," Youkey said in response to a question by Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich.

Graham did not immediately know Tuesday how long Youkey had worked at Rose & Walker.

If Busch accepts Youkey's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, several additional felony counts of forgery and theft against her will be dropped.

A Class D felony is punishable by six months to three years incarceration.

November 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man admits taking lottery tickets

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces 10 to 14 years in prison for breaking into a gasoline station after business hours and stealing an entire display of Hoosier Lotto scratch-off tickets.

Some winning tickets were cashed.

Lucian W. Dyer, 46, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to burglary, a Class C felony, in connection to the stolen tickets.

He also admitted to being a habitual offender.

Criminal charges against Dyer stemmed from a string of thefts this past May at Village Pantry on Main Street, a Lafayette-area church and Shell gas station on Teal Road.

Combined, hundreds of lottery tickets and a woman's purse were stolen.

Through a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Dyer admitted Tuesday to breaking into the Shell station.

Under questioning by his attorney, Chief Public Defender Amy Hutchison, Dyer said his plan was to steal lottery tickets.

The Lafayette Police Department was able to identify Dyer as a suspect partially from employees at Village Pantry who recognized Dyer as a frequent customer.

Though they did not know his name, one employee was able to provide Dyer's address on South 16th Street. Detectives also compared surveillance video from Village Pantry and Shell and determined that it was the same person.

According to court documents, Dyer told investigators that he recently was laid off and needed money because he was the sole provider for his girlfriend and her daughter.

Officers and detectives who searched Dyer's apartment found hundreds of scratch-off lottery tickets in a bucket in his bedroom closet. Nearly 100 winning, scratch-off tickets were found in a drawer.

Dyer is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 24 by Judge Thomas Busch.

At the time of his arrest in May, Dyer was on probation for convictions in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 in 1998 for forgery and being a habitual offender.

He faces an additional four years imprisonment for violating terms of probation in that case.

November 2, 2009: WLFI TV

Man who shot friend gets 6 years
Peter Buschmann sentenced for August 2008 shooting

Updated: Monday, 02 Nov 2009, 5:27 PM EST
Published : Monday, 02 Nov 2009, 2:19 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - Peter Buschmann, the man who shot a friend after confusing him with a burgler in an August 2008 incident, has been sentenced.

The 57-year-old Lafayette man is being sent to prison for six years. Once Buschmann is released from the Department of Corrections, he is ordered to serve two years on probation and complete an anger management class.

In August, a jury found Buschmann guilty of battery and criminal recklessness. The jury hung on other counts, including attempted murder.

Buschmann shot William Meegan in August 2008 at Cross Winds apartments. Prosecutors said both men had been drinking. Meegan suffered two gunshot wounds that left him in a coma for over four weeks.

Prosecutors said Buschmann's criminal history included several prior convictions for operating while intoxicated.

Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said condition of Buschmann's probation include: random drug screens, substance abuse treatment, no contact with the victim, and anger management classes.

November 2, 2009: WLFI TV

Lafayette man gets 6 years for shooting friend

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced this morning to six years in prison and two years on supervised probation for shooting his friend twice in the chest.

Peter N. Buschmann, 57, was found guilty of battery resulting in serious bodily injury and criminal recklessness, both Class C felonies, after a three-day jury trial in August in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

William P. Meegan was seriously injured in the Aug. 19, 2008, shooting.

Buschmann was sentenced today for only the battery conviction because the criminal recklessness charge was part of the same offense and would be double jeopardy, Judge Thomas Busch explained.

The shooting occurred at Meegan's residence at Cross Winds, an apartment complex off Indiana 38 East, after a night of heavy drinking.

Meegan testified during the trial that Buschmann attacked him unprovoked after repeatedly calling him a burglar. Buschmann, however, argued the shooting was in self defense.

He told the judge during today's sentencing hearing that the incident was fueled by alcohol.

"Your Honor, I just want to say that I understand the situation was my fault. I could have prevented this from happening," Buschmann said. "The underlying problem is that we were drinking. ... The underlying issue is alcohol. I've learned my lesson from this."

Buschmann has a lengthy history of alcohol-related arrests, including multiple convictions dating from the 1980s for operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

One of those convictions was a felony.

Meegan was in a coma at an Indianapolis hospital for about a month after being shot.

Jurors in the August trial were not able to reach verdicts for the three most serious charges against Buschmann: attempted murder and two counts of battery.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe told Busch today that his office will not retry Buschmann on those charges.

Buschmann does have a pending case in U.S. District Court in Hammond stemming from an October 2008 federal warrant served at his Lafayette apartment.

He is accused of violating a federal firearms law.

October 28, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dad gets 18 months for having child drive

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who was intoxicated and riding in a minivan driven by his 9-year-old daughter was sentenced Tuesday to 18 months in prison and one year supervised probation.

The sentence was handed down minutes after Matthew Chain Dewitt, 33, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony.

He admitted to being an alcoholic -- explaining that he was drinking beer the afternoon of Aug. 1, when he told the girl to drive them through their eastside neighborhood.

"Obviously I made some poor decisions. I've been dependent on alcohol for some time," Dewitt told Judge Pro Tem Joe Bumbleburg. "I do have the intention of maintaining sobriety. My children are important; they are dear to me."

He was arrested after a neighbor called the Lafayette Police Department, reporting that it appeared a child was behind the wheel of a minivan.

The vehicle had circled the block several times -- driving over curbs and onto the grass twice and, at times, almost hitting several vehicles, according to court documents.

When a police officer approached the minivan on Hampton Drive, near Munger Park, Dewitt was in the passenger seat. The 9-year-old was behind the wheel, buckled up and driving.

A cooler containing several empty beer cans, an empty whiskey bottle, a vodka bottle and a plastic foam cup containing beer were found inside.

"There were open containers in the vehicle at the time. Was I drinking them? No," Dewitt told Bumbleburg during Tuesday's hearing.

He said the plastic cup had been left there on the prior day.

Dewitt had a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.20 percent afterward, according to court documents. The legal limit to drive in Indiana is 0.08 percent.

He admitted to drinking a can of Budweiser before getting in the minivan.

Bumbleburg hesitated before accepting the plea agreement through the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, which dropped additional counts against Dewitt.

They included misdemeanor counts of public intoxication and having an open container and a felony count of criminal recklessness.

"Neglect of a dependent doesn't really do this justice," Bumbleburg said. "A 9-year-old behind the wheel of a car ... is an accident waiting to happen.

"The offense is a lot more serious than the label put on this."

He accepted it only because of an ongoing Child in Need of Services case involving Dewitt and his daughter in Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court.

Bumbleburg ordered that Dewitt must adhere to all orders in the CHINS proceeding as part of the criminal case.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Dewitt faced only six months to three years incarceration for all of the charges against him because all were part of a single incident.

The sentences would merge, rather than running consecutively.

Zeman and Dewitt's public defender, Rachael Schexnailder, agreed to the 18-month sentence prior to Tuesday's hearing. That allowed Bumbleburg to immediately sentence Dewitt.

He had been scheduled to stand trial Nov. 17.

Dewitt was given a combined 176 days credit for time already served and for good behavior. Schexnailder told Bumbleburg that the CHINS case will or already has included therapy and counseling for Dewitt, his daughter and the rest of their family.

October 22, 2009: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Man found guilty of 15 molesting counts

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Stockwell man accused of sexually abusing a young boy multiple times during a four-year period faces a number of years in prison for the crimes.

Larry R. Cox, 41, was found guilty Wednesday afternoon of 15 counts of child molestation -- 10 Class A felonies and five Class C felonies -- after a two-day trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Jurors deliberated for about two hours before returning their verdicts.

"The family is not happy with the outcome. They are relieved," Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said afterward. "They're relieved that (the boy) can now be safe."

Zeman and Cox's attorney, John Sorenson, will meet Friday with Judge Thomas Busch to schedule a sentencing hearing.

Charges against Cox were filed after the boy told his cousin a year ago that he was repeatedly molested. The cousin then told his mother, who contacted the boy's mom.

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify victims of sexual-based crimes.

Cox is an acquaintance of the boy's mom and would sometimes baby-sit, according to testimony and court documents.

The boy, now 10 years old, took the witness stand Tuesday afternoon. Jurors also watched a videotaped interview between the boy and Cheri Pruitt, an investigator with the prosecutor's office.

In the video, the boy said Cox allegedly threatened to harm him -- "he said he would cut my tongue out, stuff like that" -- if the boy told anyone.

When asked how often the sexual abuse occurred, the boy estimated it was more than 40 times. He also described more recent incidents between himself and Cox.

"I did not like it. I told him to leave me alone, but he wouldn't," the boy said. "... I was basically laying on the pillow screaming."

Cox testified Wednesday morning, explaining that he and the boy have hunted, fished and done other activities together. But he denied ever touching the boy sexually.

The charges against Cox were of varying felonies based on the severity of individual incidents. Child molestation in Indiana can range from fondling to sexual intercourse.

Each Class A felony is punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison. Each Class C felony is punishable by three to eight years in prison. All counts could be stacked at sentencing because they were for separate allegations.

October 22, 2009: **WLFI TV**

Prosecutor: Lopez never had license
Lopez is the alleged driver in Oct. 20 fatal crash

Updated: Thursday, 22 Oct 2009, 5:03 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 22 Oct 2009, 5:00 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man accused of leaving the scene of a fatal crash made an initial court appearance Thursday before Magistrate Norris Wang.

37-year-old Mario Lopez is charged with Leaving the Scene of an Accident Resulting in Death, Leaving the Scene of an Accident Causing Property Damage and Operating a Motor Vehicle While Never Receiving a License.

Lopez was located later that morning in the Emergency Room of Home Hospital. He was being treated for a cut.

Police said Lopez was identified with a Honduran ID card.

Court records say Lopez and Everardo Delreal of Boswell were returning from a car auction in Illinois Tuesday morning. Police said Lopez told them Delreal had gotten sleepy, so they switched drivers. According to records, Lopez told police he must have dozed off, gone off the road and struck some construction equipment off State Road 43.

Delreal was trapped in the wreckage and later died.

Court records said Lopez told police he left the scene of the crash because he did not have a license.

A preliminary trial date is scheduled in January.

October 16, 2009: WLFI TV

Man found guilty of theft from elderly
Posed as security guard, stole credit cards

Updated: Friday, 16 Oct 2009, 6:21 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 16 Oct 2009, 5:34 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - An Illinois man faces a lengthy prison sentence after being convicted of forgery and theft from the elderly.

A Tippecanoe County jury deliberated two hours before finding 56-year-old Levie Jackson guilty of 14 criminal charges including forgery, theft, and being a habitual offender.

Jackson was arrested after he approached elderly people outside of a Lafayette shopping center saying he was a security guard offering coupons.

He told victims he need to see their ID to prove they were over 65.

He would steal their credit cards when they gave him their wallets.

Jackson will be sentenced November 13. He faces up to 56 years in prison.

He has prior convictions for burglary, illegal use of a credit card device and credit card fraud.

Three counties in Illinois still have warrants on him for similar charges.

October 14, 2009: WLFI TV

Charges filed in Lafayette shooting
Ronald Lampitok awaits extradition

Updated: Wednesday, 14 Oct 2009, 4:28 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 14 Oct 2009, 4:28 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -
Charges have been filed against a man accused of firing shots at another man.

50-year-old Ronald Lampitok is accused of firing two shots at a jogger on September 10th in the area of 16th and Perdue in Lafayette. He faces several charges including being a Serious Felon in Possession of a Firearm. Lampitok bonded out of jail shortly after his arrest, and was later apprehended Coles County, Illinois.

Court documents say witnesses accounts led police to a house on Grove Street.

The Affidavit said Lampitok made a statement to police at the police department. He told detectives that he believed that some unidentified black males who he had argued with a few days earlier had shot at his residence or thrown rocks at the window for several nights. He could not say who they were and admitted that the police had never been called to investigate any of these instances. He said that morning someone threw a brick through his window, and when he went outside he saw two black males running toward 16th Street. He said that this was around 15 minutes before the police arrived to his house. However, Lampitok claimed he had never left the house and had not been riding his moped that day. He denied pointing a gun at anyone, but acknowledged that he would probably not tell the officer if he did.

The detective interviewing Lampitok said he made several comments to the effect that the 'old Ron' would have killed all of them. When asked if the 'new Ron' would have just shot off a few rounds and told them to knock it off, Lampitok answered affirmatively. But he still said he could not do what he wanted to do, which was to kill all of them.

Court records say Lampitok was on parole for prior convictions for Robbery and Carjacking at the time of his arrest. In addition, his history shows a conviction for Manufacturing/Delivering Cocaine in Coles County, Illinois around November 1995, several convictions in August 2002 in Coles County for offenses including Escape from a Penal Facility with a weapon, Felon in Possession of a Firearm, Aggravated Fleeing Police. There are also convictions listed in Orange County, California around January 1987 for Burglary and Assault with a Deadly Weapon and in Alameda County around November 1980 for an offense involving a Dangerous Weapon.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the Indiana Parole Board is in the process of filing an extradition request. Lampitok was fighting his return to Indiana. No word yet on how long it might take for law enforcement to bring Lampitok back to Tippecanoe County to face charges.

October 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

5 charged for suspected heroin deals

STAFF REPORTS

Criminal charges were filed today against five people accused of conspiring to sell heroin, a highly addictive opiate, in the Lafayette area.

The arrests - a group of three on Oct. 1 and two on Friday - are indicative of what investigators believe is an increase in heroin use in Tippecanoe County, according to Sgt. Tim Payne, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit.

He said the drug appears to be coming from both Chicago and Indianapolis.

One suspect arrested last week has allegedly been dealing for up to three months and purchases bulk amounts "every day or two" in Chicago, court documents allege.

The Oct. 1 investigation is unrelated to Friday's probe, Payne said.

Arrested were:

• Paul D. Coffman, 42, of West Lafayette. He is charged with conspiracy to commit dealing in a narcotic drug; possession of a narcotic drug; and two counts of dealing in a narcotic drug. All are Class A felonies.

He also is charged with maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

• Michelle C. Trinkle, 33, of Lafayette. She is charged with conspiracy to commit dealing in a narcotic drug, a Class A felony; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

According to a probable cause affidavit included with charges against them in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, a confidential informant bought heroin from Coffman on Friday at Devon Plaza in Lafayette.

Trinkle reportedly drove Coffman to the motel.

The Street Crimes Unit recovered 43 bundles of a substance from Coffman that field-tested positive for heroin.

• Tyler J. Collins, 21, Brandy M. Davis, 25, and Ashley M. Johnson, all of Lafayette, were arrested on Oct. 1.

Each is charged with conspiracy to commit dealing in a narcotic drug, a Class A felony; conspiracy to commit possession of a narcotic drug, a Class B felony; and attempted possession of a narcotic drug, a Class B felony.

Collins also is charged with maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

Johnson has an additional charge of possession of a narcotic drug, a Class B felony.

They were arrested after a detective with the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force saw Johnson allegedly buy heroin in the parking lot at Marathon-Village Pantry at U.S. 52 and Schuyler Avenue.

She then got into a vehicle driven by Collins. Davis was sitting in the front seat.

A sheriff's deputy followed their vehicle.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with charges against them in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, investigators suspect that Johnson actually gave Collins and Davis a fake package of heroin.

She then allegedly kept the actual purchased heroin for herself.

Collins was being held tonight in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $100,000 surety bond. The other suspects were each being held on a $50,000 surety bond.

Compiled by Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

October 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen faces adult charges after fight, flight

- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A McCutcheon High School student who fled from a school office in September after a fight is a member of a criminal gang, court documents allege.

Jamale S. Robinson, 17, will be tried as an adult on that accusation, along with felony counts of escape, residential entry, theft and attempted auto theft.

He also is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with misdemeanor counts of battery, disorderly conduct and resisting law enforcement.

Robinson was waived on Tuesday from Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court, by Judge Loretta Rush.

Charges against him stem from a series of incidents on Sept. 16. Robinson allegedly was one of several male students involved in a fist fight that began shortly after McCutcheon's school day ended.

The teenager then ran to the nearby McCutcheon Heights subdivision and went into a house on Mayflower Drive, according to Maj. Charlie Williams of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

The homeowner "was out walking her dog. When she got home, she found a man standing in her kitchen," Williams said. "He took off running."

According to Robinson's charging information, he is accused of taking the homeowner's cell phone and car keys. He still allegedly had the keys when arrested by sheriff's deputies.

In a waiver of jurisdiction order signed by Rush, she noted that Robinson has prior juvenile adjudications - similar to a conviction - for receiving/concealing stolen property and for violating probation.

The teenager also is wanted on a warrant issued from Detroit.

Robinson was being held today on a $50,000 surety bond at the Tippecanoe County Jail.

October 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Child porn nets man 15 months

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who downloaded images and a video containing child pornography onto his family's computer was sentenced Friday to 15 months in prison.

Joshua R. Butram, 24, pleaded guilty in August in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to possession of child pornography, a Class D felony, and possession of drug paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor.

But Butram claimed Friday that he never looked at any of the files.

"This has been a very traumatic and life-changing experience," he told Judge Randy Williams. "I'm sorry for what I've done. I give you my word -- nothing like this will ever happen again."

Charges were filed after Butram's wife found photos and a file -- its name referencing ages 10 to 13 -- on their home computer on Oct. 20, 2007, and asked him to delete them.

She told him to leave their home after noticing, four days later, that child pornography was still on the computer, according to court documents and statements made during Friday's sentencing hearing.

The Lafayette Police Department got involved on Oct. 26, 2007, after Butram sent his wife a text message hinting that he might commit suicide.

The computer was seized, and investigators found 17 digital images and one video containing child pornography.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman pointed out Friday that Butram has a 5-year-old daughter. The downloaded video depicting a girl under age 13.

"More than six days later ... the files were still there," Zeman said. "How hard is it to hit the delete button?"

Butram claimed his computer somehow malfunctioned.

"I tried deleting them," he said. "I kept getting errors -- the files couldn't be deleted."

Williams also ordered that Butram serve 13 months on probation and register as a sex offender for 10 years after his release from prison. The judge also questioned Butram's story.

"Rationale. Excuses?" Williams said. "I don't get it."

October 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets 5 years for setting home on fire

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette woman has been sentenced to five years in prison for setting her home, which was the subject of foreclosure proceedings, on fire.

Amy Jo Keith, 34, pleaded guilty in May in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to arson, a Class B felony. Three Lafayette firefighters were among the people who attended her sentencing hearing Friday in Judge Thomas Busch's chambers.

The Lafayette Fire Department was called to Keith's home at 116 Wise Drive, on the city's south end, the afternoon of March 18, 2008. The blaze started in the living room of the one-story residence.

Keith's husband told investigators that they were having problems with their thermostat. Keith also said she had gone home that day and heard the furnace making weird noises.

According to court documents, the couple was several months behind in mortgage payments. GMAC Mortgage Corp. filed to foreclose the property in December 2007.

Fire investigators found nothing wrong with either the thermostat or the furnace that would have caused a fire. They determined it started when a book of crossword puzzles was lit and thrown on the floor in the living room.

Keith also was ordered Friday to serve one year on community corrections and four years on probation.

Investigators do not believe her husband knew the blaze was intentionally set.

October 2, 2009: WLFI TV

Man charged: Dealing LSD near daycare
Faces several other charges as well

Updated: Friday, 02 Oct 2009, 5:16 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 02 Oct 2009, 4:33 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The smell of marijuana led Lafayette Police to a drug arrest.

40-year-old Faron Edward James faces several charges, including dealing LSD within 1000 feet of a daycare and possession of marijuana over thirty grams.

Sergeant Jay Rosen said officers responded to a complaint and followed the scent of marijuana to 1918 Pierce Street.

After obtaining a search warrant, Rosen says investigators found a marijuana grow operation, LSD, illegal mushrooms, more than 33 pounds of marijuana.

Police also found several rifles, shotguns, and handguns.

October 2, 2009: WLFI TV

Woman sentenced for burning own house
Mortgage debt may have exceeded value of house

Updated: Friday, 02 Oct 2009, 4:55 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 02 Oct 2009, 4:46 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A woman who set fire to her own home has been sentenced.

A judge sentenced 34-year-old Amy Keith to five years in prison, one year on community corrections, then four years on probation.

Keith pleaded guilty to arson stemming from a March 2008 fire at 116 Wise Drive.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Keith admitted in court she burned a crossword puzzle book, then threw it down on some papers next to the couch and walked away.

"She said her mortgage was upside down, meaning she owed more on her house than what it was worth," said Harrington.

Harrington said Keith told the judge she was bad with money.

As part of the sentence, Keith was ordered to pay $54,000 restitution to the insurance company.

September 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Shooting suspect's parole revoked, police on the hunt

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Federal, state and local authorities are trying to find a recently paroled prisoner accused of firing shots at a

jogger last week in Lafayette's Valley Center neighborhood.

Ronald J. Lampitok, 50, was released Aug. 22 from the Indiana Department of Correction after serving less than half of an 18-year sentence for robbery and carjacking.

A warrant for his arrest was issued Sept. 11 because of Lampitok's alleged involvement in the Valley Center shooting, according to Rick Loudermilk, supervisor of the DOC's Terre Haute parole district.

Lampitok was supposed to turn himself in earlier this week, Detective B.T. Brown of the Lafayette Police Department said Wednesday.

But Lampitok's current whereabouts are unknown.

"Unfortunately, he made bond before we heard about the incident," Loudermilk said. "How someone out of prison for less than three weeks came up with $10,000 upfront (for bond) ... that was a surprise."

Lampitok is accused of firing at least two shots Sept. 10 at Joseph Jackson, 21, of Lafayette. Jackson was jogging through the central Lafayette neighborhood when Lampitok allegedly began chasing him on a mo-ped.

Jackson was not injured.

Brown said Wednesday investigators have found no indication that Lampitok knew Jackson or whether they've interacted before. He declined to comment on what investigators suspect prompted the incident.

Lampitok had been living at 1511 Grove St. with an adult daughter.

He was arrested shortly after the shooting on suspicion of attempted voluntary manslaughter, being a felon in possession of a firearm and criminal recklessness with a deadly weapon.

He posted a $100,000 surety bond -- equal to $10,000 cash -- the same day.

"We are actively looking for him," Brown said.

In Indiana, defendants have the right to have reasonable bail set, unless he is arrested for murder. The amount is related to the seriousness of the crime.

Brown said he was unaware whether Lampitok has obtained an attorney. A home telephone number could not be found to reach him for comment.

Lampitok's 18-year prison sentence came after a jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury convicted him of robbery and carjacking.

Formal charges have not yet been filed in connection to the Valley Center incident. Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Tim Kern said Wednesday that his office is reviewing the case.

Loudermilk said U.S. marshals and the Indiana State Police were asked to help locate Lampitok. He lived in eastern Illinois, in the Charleston area, prior to his earlier arrest in Tippecanoe County.

Additional Facts
What you can do

Anyone with information on Ronald J. Lampitok's whereabouts is asked to call Lafayette police at (765) 807-1200 or the anonymous WeTip hot line at (800) 782-7463.

September 11, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Baby sitter sentenced for abusing 2-year-old

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

With credit for time already served, a Lafayette woman will spend little time in prison for hitting a boy she was baby-sitting, causing hemorrhaging in his testicles.

Mindy M. Taylor, 29, pleaded guilty in July in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony, for injuries suffered by the 2-year-old boy a year ago.

She was sentenced Thursday by Judge Randy Williams to 608 days in prison. That will be followed by one year and 61 days on community corrections -- some combination of work release, house arrest and day reporting -- and two years probation.

But Taylor already served 252 days in the Tippecanoe County Jail and has been at community corrections since late July.

The boy's mother, Amy Williams, testified during Taylor's sentencing hearing that her son still gets frightened when she or any other female changes his diaper.

"I go through this every day. ... When I try to change his diaper, he tries to get away," Amy Williams said. "People said, 'Oh, he's too young, he won't remember.'

" ... This happened to my son for almost five hours straight."

Taylor was watching the boy and three of her own young children on Oct. 9, 2008, when the incident occurred.

Taylor testified Thursday that she was angry because the boy allegedly had hit one of her daughters.

She punched the boy twice in the genitals and hit him there again with a toy monkey, according to court documents.

But Taylor, who admitted to Lafayette investigators that the boy's genitals were swollen and red, never sought medical attention.

His mother took him to St. Elizabeth Central hospital.

"I have so much remorse and so much pain for what I did that I lost the most important things in my life -- my kids," Taylor said Thursday. "All I can do is apologize for what I did."

Her attorney, Kurtis Fouts, told Williams that Taylor suffers from bipolar disorder and a low IQ.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Taylor's deception caused detectives to initially suspect the boy's mother and her boyfriend of abusing him.

August 22, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen will spend rest of his sentence in jail

-- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Crawfordsville teenager who caused a two-vehicle crash that killed his two passengers, an unborn child and the other driver will serve the remainder of his sentence in prison.

Tyler Sutton, 19, was sentenced last December to two years on work release and four years probation for driving with marijuana in his system -- a Class C felony in Indiana.

He ran a stop sign on County Road 700 East at Indiana 28 on Sept. 8, 2007, colliding with a vehicle driven by Marilyn E. Gardner, 78, of Indianapolis.

Gardner and Sutton's North Montgomery High School classmates, Megan M. Hinds and Jennah S. Smith, both 15, died. Hinds was 24 weeks pregnant.

Sutton appeared Friday morning before Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 for violating terms of work release. The teen asked that the remaining sentence, 234 days, be spent in the Department of Correction, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

"He will likely serve half of that, and then will still have the four years of probation," Harrington said.

Work release is part of Tippecanoe County Community Corrections. It requested the Friday hearing because Sutton failed to obtain employment and was not being truthful about his whereabouts.

"They have surveillance officers who routinely check on you," Harrington said.

Sutton, who was 17 at the time of the crash, pleaded guilty to three counts of operating a vehicle with a controlled substance causing death and feticide, all Class C felonies. He currently is being held at the Tippecanoe County Jail.

August 21, 2009: WLFI TV

Teen, on work release for crash, jailed
Prosecutors: Tyler Sutton violated work release

Updated: Friday, 21 Aug 2009, 4:16 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 21 Aug 2009, 4:00 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A teenager who avoided prison for causing a crash that killed three people and an unborn child, is now being sent to the Department of Corrections.

19-year-old Tyler Sutton was involved in the crash at State Road 28 and County Road 700 East near Stockwell in September of 2007. Sutton had marijuana in his system and he disregarded a stop sign.

The driver of the other car and two passengers, North Montgomery High School students Jennah Smith and Megan Hinds, were killed. Hinds was 24 weeks pregnant.

At trial, Sutton pleaded guilty to Operating with a Controlled Substance in his Body Causing Death, and Feticide. In December, Sutton was sentenced to two years on work release.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Sutton failed to abide by work release rules and failed to maintain employment. He said Sutton was moved to the Tippecanoe County jail in May, but Friday a judge granted Sutton's request to serve the remaining 234 days of his sentence in prison.

Once he's released, Sutton will serve 4 years on probation.

August 19, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Convicted robber faces more time

- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager already serving a 30-year sentence for armed robbery faces another 10 years in prison for his involvement in three other holdups.

McConney J. George, 19, pleaded guilty earlier this month to two counts of robbery while armed with a deadly weapon and one count of robbery while armed, causing serious bodily injury.

All counts are Class B felonies.

George previously was scheduled to stand trial beginning Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. He will be sentenced Sept. 2 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The charges stem from an armed robbery on Jan. 26, 2008, at Penn Station, 3450 Indiana 38 E.; and on March 8, 2008, at Long John Silver's, 2839 Teal Road, and a Citgo gas station, 999 S. Creasy Lane.

George, who was one of four teenagers charged, was believed to be the ringleader in organizing and carrying out the crimes.

A knife was used during the Penn Station incident, and employees were beaten. At Long John Silver's and Citgo, guns were displayed and employees were struck by the suspects or pistol-whipped, according to court documents.

The 30-year prison sentence George is serving was for his convictions for 11 felonies - multiple counts of robbery, criminal confinement and theft - after a jury trial in February.

If Busch accepts George's plea agreement, he will receive 10 years each for the three remaining cases, Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich said Wednesday.

Those three sentences would be served concurrently but after George completes his 30-year sentence, she said. Additional charges against him would be dropped.

George's codefendants, Shamone L. Evans, 19, Kevin K. Williams, 20, and Nick C. Williams, 19, all pleaded guilty and were sentenced to some prison time.

August 18, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Prosecutor weighing retrial

-- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office is reviewing whether a Lafayette man who admitted to shooting his friend can be tried without violating double jeopardy.

Peter N. Buschmann, 57, was convicted last week of battery resulting in serious bodily injury and criminal recklessness, both Class C felonies, for the August 2008 shooting that seriously injured William P. Meegan.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury, however, was not able to reach verdicts against Buschmann for attempted murder, aggravated battery and battery by means of a deadly weapon.

The shooting took place at Meegan's residence at Cross Winds, an apartment complex off Indiana 38 East.

Both men gave contrasting testimony of what took place. Buschmann admitted to shooting Meegan twice in the chest, but allegedly only after Meegan lunged at him first.

Meegan testified that Buschmann called him a burglar shortly before the shooting.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Monday that his offices expects that it can file the attempted murder charge again, since no verdict was reached.

But it's unclear whether refiling the two battery charges -- one a B felony, the other a C felony -- will constitute double jeopardy since jurors found Buschmann guilty of a third battery offense.

Double jeopardy refers to a U.S. constitutional right that protects people from being tried for the same crime after an acquittal or a conviction.

August 18, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Nurse accused of stealing medication

-- Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a nurse accused of stealing medication, allegedly for her personal use, from St. Elizabeth Central hospital.

Lolita S. Esposito, 45, of Holly Hill, Fla., has not yet been arrested.

The former Greensburg woman is expected to turn herself in on Aug. 28, the day of her initial hearing, according to Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department.

Charges stem from an investigation that began nearly a year ago.

Shumaker said Esposito worked for a nursing agency hired by St. Vincent Seton Specialty Hospital Lafayette, which operates on a floor rented at St. Elizabeth.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, St. Vincent had a dispenser system for controlled substances that requires fingerprint identification and records the information.

It showed that Esposito removed 35 oxycodone tablets and two Oxazepam tablets between Aug. 27 and Sept. 10, 2008, that were not documented as being administered to any patients.

Esposito began working on that floor on Aug. 26, 2008.

Oxycodone is a prescription painkiller. Oxazepam is a prescription drug commonly used to treat anxiety or alcohol withdrawal.

Esposito was charged Thursday in Superior Court 1 with possession of a narcotic drug, possession of a controlled substance and theft, all Class D felonies.

Shumaker said Esposito told him that she entered into and recently completed a three-month substance abuse in Florida.

A home telephone number could not be found to reach her for comment. Tippe-canoe County's court database does not indicate that she has obtained or been appointed an attorney.

The Indiana Professional Licensing Agency's online database shows that Esposito's nursing license is active through October.

August 17, 2009: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Man held for harming boy who is disabled

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man is accused of purposely hitting his wife's 7-year-old son because the boy wouldn't eat, causing two black eyes.

Cesar Arenas, 30, was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with battery on a child and battery on a disabled person, both Class D felonies.

The boy has Down syndrome, a genetic condition that delays a child's mental and physical development.

Arenas was being held Saturday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

His arrest came after someone called Aug. 8 to report a domestic disturbance at 2684 Priest Drive, according to the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

Arenas, his wife and three children live at that address.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Arenas claimed he tried to lightly smack the boy in the head to get his attention but "accidentally" hit him in the face.

The boy's mother called her parents after returning home and seeing the two black eyes. She allegedly told her mother that she was not going to call police.

The Department of Child Services removed the boy and two other children from the home.

According to the affidavit, Arenas is accused of being in the United States illegally and using the alias Cesar Moreno. He also was out on bond on charges of fraud and counterfeiting filed in May in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

August 14, 2009: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Shooter guilty on 2 of 5 charges

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

After three days of testimony and three hours of deliberation, jurors could not agree Thursday whether a Lafayette man was guilty of attempted murder for shooting his friend twice in the chest.

The Tippe-canoe Superior Court 2 jury also was unable to reach verdicts against Peter N. Buschmann, 57, for aggravated battery and battery by means of a deadly weapon.

Buschmann, however, was found guilty of battery resulting in serious bodily injury and criminal recklessness, both Class C felonies, for the August 19, 2008, shooting that seriously injured William P. Meegan.

He faces between four and 16 years incarceration when he's sentenced Sept. 30 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Buschmann and Meegan gave contrasting versions of what took place that morning at Meegan's residence at Cross Winds, a large apartment complex off Indiana 38 East.

Buschmann took the stand Thursday in his own defense, admitting that he shot Meegan twice in the chest after a night of heavy drinking a year ago.

But he claimed that Meegan, who outweighs Buschmann by more than 200 pounds, lunged at him and tried to reach for a handgun that Buschmann always carried in a holster on his right side.

Buschmann's Indianapolis-based attorneys, Frederick Vaiana and Jennifer Lukemeyer, argued that their client acted quickly to save his life.

" 'I had to do what I did because I didn't know what he would do if he got my gun,' " Vaiana told jurors of Buschmann's rationale during closing arguments.

" 'I had no way out.' "

Meegan, however, testified that Buschmann repeatedly called him a burglar and reached for the gun. Both consumed large amounts of beer and liquor the previous night and that morning.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe pointed out that Buschmann was not injured during what Buschmann claimed was a "life or death" struggle in the apartment.

However, Meegan was in a drug-induced coma for a month at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. He suffered damage to his kidney, liver and colon.

"He is the one that has motive to lie," O'Keefe said of Buschmann. Prosecutors also noted that Buschmann never told any of the five police officers who responded to the shooting that he was attacked.

He did initially say he thought he shot a burglar -- a story that matched what Meegan told investigators after waking from his coma.

The offenses for which jurors were unable to reach a verdict were the three most significant criminal charges against Buschmann. Attempted murder, for instance, is a Class A felony punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison.

The two battery offenses are Class B felonies.

August 13, 2009: WLFI TV

Public gets inside look at gangs
Open forum focused on signs, symbols

Updated: Wednesday, 12 Aug 2009, 11:57 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 12 Aug 2009, 11:51 PM EDT

- Laura Kirtley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Just in time for school to start, a public forum in Lafayette focused on the fight against gangs in schools and the community. This was the first of its kind and those in attendance said it was eye-opening.

"The graffiti not being too far from here, it was scary," parent Betty Lewis said.

More than 170 people got an up-close look at gang influence in the area. Through a series of local speakers and Powerpoint demonstrations, the team from Project Safe Neighborhoods told those in attendance about gang graffiti, signs, and other identifiers.

"I brought him because I wanted to him to see some of the photographs and know what does that look like so if he is exposed to it and he starts to see those kinds of things, what does it mean," parent Aruna Deen said.

Faith Baptist Church helped sponsor the event. Many people at the forum said they feel empowered by the information and plan to share it with others.

"The websites that they mentioned I'm going to send them out to a lot of my friends," Deen said.

"Now I am going to be more aware of symbols and things like that to know. And, to help educate people that I work with," Realtor Peggy Skinner said.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he wants to do more public forums. He said it is important to show how community members can participate.

For more information on Project Safe Neighborhoods click here .

August 13, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Gangs prompt a proactive response

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

It has been 11 years since Tashiana Armstrong moved from Gary to Lafayette.

But scars where bullets struck her left arm and kneecap are daily reminders of her life in northwest Indiana.

Armstrong just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time -- twice a victim of gang-related gunfire.

"I had my 3-month-old daughter with me in the car. The bullet went in right here and went right out," Armstrong said, pointing to a raised wound on her knee.

"I was raised all around gangs. I didn't want that for my kids."

She was among an estimated 150 people who attended a presentation Wednesday, hosted by Project Safe Neighborhoods through the prosecutor's office, on gang-related activity in Tippecanoe County.

The presentation was sponsored by and held at Faith Community Center.

We realize that it is an ongoing issue in Lafayette and West Lafayette," said Andy Woodall, pastor of student ministries at Faith Baptist Church.

"We want to be out in front of the problem instead of just reactive."

Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Kathryn Redd, coordinator of Tippecanoe County's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative, shared information about gangs compiled from local law enforcement and testimony presented during criminal sentencing hearings.

Among the statistics presented Wednesday night by Harrington and Redd:

☐ Tippecanoe County currently has 28 known gangs, up 42 percent from 18 known gangs in 2008. The information is gathered largely from inmates at the Tippecanoe County Jail.
☐ In the past seven months, 15 people convicted and sentenced in Tippecanoe County courts have been confirmed as gang members, based on criteria through the FBI.

"I had someone tell me the other day, 'Pat, with the way you've been running around talking, I thought we had 10,000 gang members,' " Harrington said.

"But when do gangs become an issue? When should we begin to care? ... That's right, with one. One is too many."

Detective Rob Rush, gang liaison for the sheriff's office, brought notebooks, belts and drawings confiscated from area children -- identified gang members -- so that people could have an up-close look afterward.

"Get involved in your kids' MySpace pages. Check what Web sites they are visiting," Rush said. "Search their rooms, check their cell phones and their notebooks.

"If you think it's gang graffiti, call your local law enforcement or call me. We will help you."

Derek Corneilisen, a 15-year-old Jefferson High School student, agrees with Rush's sentiment on parental involvement. He attended Wednesday's presentation as part of court-ordered community service.

"You'll be walking down the hall and a fight breaks out," Corneilisen said. "You'll see people throwing gang signs. ... Parents just need to watch what their kids are doing."

Additional Facts

Learn more
For more on Project Safe Neighborhoods and gang-related crime in Tippecanoe County, go to www.tippecanoe.in.gov/PSN

August 13, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury agrees on 2 of 5 charges in shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

After three days of testimony and three hours of deliberation, jurors could not agree whether a Lafayette man was guilty of attempted murder for shooting his friend twice in the chest.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury also was unable to reach verdicts against Peter N. Buschmann, 57, for aggravated battery and battery by means of a deadly weapon.

Buschmann, however, was found guilty of battery resulting in serious bodily injury and criminal recklessness, both Class C felonies, for the August 19, 2008, shooting that seriously injured William P. Meegan.

He faces between four and 16 years incarceration when he's sentenced Sept. 30 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The verdicts were returned about 6 p.m. today.

Buschmann and Meegan gave contrasting versions of what took place that morning at Meegan's residence at Cross Winds, a large apartment complex off Indiana 38 East.

Buschmann took the stand this morning in his own defense, admitting that he shot Meegan twice in the chest after a night of heavy drinking a year ago.

But he claimed that Meegan, who outweighs Buschmann by more than 200 pounds, lunged at him and tried to reach for a handgun that Buschmann always carried in a holster on his right side.

Buschmann's Indianapolis-based attorneys, Frederick Vaiana and Jennifer Lukemeyer, argued that their client acted fast to save his own life.

" 'I had to do what I did because I didn't know what he would do if he got my gun,' " Vaiana told jurors of Buschmann's rationale during closing arguments.

" 'I had no way out.' "

Meegan, however, testified that Buschmann repeatedly called him a burglar and reached for gun. Both consumed large amounts of beer and liquor at two Lafayette restaurants the previous night before and that morning, according to testimony.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe pointed out that Buschmann was not injured during what Buschmann claimed was a "life or death" struggle in Meegan's apartment.

After the shooting, Meegan was in a drug-induced coma for a month at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. He suffered damage to his kidney, liver and colon.

"He is the one that has motive to lie," O'Keefe said of Buschmann. Prosecutors also noted that Buschmann never told any of the five police officers who responded to the shooting that he was attacked.

He did initially say he thought he shot a burglar - a story that matched what Meegan told investigators after waking from his coma.

The offenses for which jurors were unable to reach a verdict were the three most significant criminal charges against Buschmann. Attempted murder, for instance, is a Class A felony punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison.

The two battery offenses are Class B felonies.

August 12, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Meeting on gang crime tonight

STAFF REPORTS

New information on gang-related criminal activity in Tippecanoe County will be released during tonight's Project Safe Neighborhoods presentation.

The presentation, called "Is Your Neighborhood Safe?," is free and open to the public. It will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Faith Community Center's multi-purpose room, 5572 Mercy Way, off Indiana 26 East.

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a federal anti-crime, anti-gang initiative through the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Speakers include Prosecutor Pat Harrington, safe neighborhoods coordinator Kathryn Redd and representatives from Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County police agencies.

Harrington said information being released tonight was compiled information released during court sentencings, among other resources.

Sheriff's Detective Rob Rush also will be giving a presentation that will include photos of gang-related activity, such as graffiti, that has been found in Tippecanoe County.

August 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charge: Girl, 9, drove so dad could drink

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A 9-year-old girl drove her father around their Lafayette neighborhood this past weekend so that he could drink alcoholic beverages, court documents allege.

Matthew Chain Dewitt, 32, was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with neglect of a dependent and criminal recklessness with a vehicle, both Class D felonies.

He also is charged with misdemeanor counts of public intoxication, permitting an unauthorized person to drive and having an open container in the passenger compartment.

The girl is the oldest of Dewitt's three children, according to information he told Judge Randy Williams during his initial hearing Thursday afternoon.

Dewitt was ordered to not contact his daughter, per paperwork filed by the prosecutor's office.

His arrest came after someone in the 900 block of Eastwich Drive, near Munger Park on the city's east side, called the Lafayette Police Department about 6:15 p.m. Saturday.

The woman said someone who appeared to be a child was driving a minivan around the neighborhood -- running a stop sign and almost hitting a fence. A home telephone number could not be found Thursday to reach the caller for comment.

Officer Chandler Cahoon then spotted a Pontiac Montana, which matched the caller's description of the minivan, stop at the end of Hampton Drive. The street turns into a cul de sac there.

The 9-year-old was in the driver's seat, buckled up and crying.

Dewitt told Williams during his initial hearing that he, his wife and their three children moved in with relatives on Hampton Drive about a month ago.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the girl told investigators that Dewitt said earlier that he wanted to teach the girl how to drive.

She circled the block several times -- driving over curbs and onto the grass twice and, at times, almost hitting several vehicles.

A cooler containing several empty beer cans, an empty whiskey bottle in the dash area, a vodka bottle and a Styrofoam cup were found inside the vehicle.

The girl told investigators that Dewitt was drinking from the cup and that her father gets "wobbly" when intoxicated. She described him as "wobbly" on Saturday.

She also said Dewitt was not supposed to be drinking, though it's unclear why from court documents.

Dewitt was given a portable breath test at the jail, which registered a breath alcohol concentration of 0.20 percent. The legal limit to drive in 0.08 percent in Indiana.

He was being held late Thursday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $10,000 surety bond, jail staff said.

August 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen gets 18 years for robberies

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Chicago teenager was sentenced today to 18 years of incarceration for his involvement in armed robberies last year at two Lafayette restaurants and a gas station.

Nick C. Williams, 19, will serve 11 years in prison, two years on community corrections and five years on probation, Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 ordered.

Though Williams was 17 at the time of the holdups, the severity of the crimes meant he was automatically waived to be tried as an adult.

"... I would like to say sorry to all the people I let down," he said during today's sentencing hearing, reading from a written statement. "My parents raised me better than this."

Williams was one of four teenagers charged in robberies on Jan. 26, 2008, at Penn Station, 3540 Indiana 38 E.; and on March 8, 2008, at Long John Silver's, 2839 Teal Road, and Citgo gas station, 999 S. Creasy Lane.

A knife was used during the Penn Station incident, and employees were beaten. At Long John Silver's and Citgo, cash was taken, guns were displayed and employees reported being struck by the suspects or pistol-whipped.

Williams acted as the lookout at the Penn Station and Long John Silver's robberies, according to his attorney, Steve Meyer. He stayed in the vehicle when other suspects went into Citgo.

"He was a 17-year-old kid who got caught up with a group of other individuals," Meyer told Busch. "As his father said, he was impressionable. ... He's not a violent kid on his own."

Williams had moved from Chicago to Lafayette to stay with sisters in the area. He later returned to Chicago and was arrested there on a warrant in January.

Several members of the teen's family drove from Chicago this afternoon to attend Williams sentencing hearing.

His father, Floyd Lewis, described his son as "too easygoing, too trustworthy.

"I tell him, don't believe someone is your friend just because you know them."

Williams pleaded guilty in May to three counts of conspiracy to commit armed robbery and three counts of theft, all felonies.

Two of the other suspects also pleaded guilty to their involvement in the holdups. Shamone L. Evans, 19, considered one of two "ringleaders," is serving a 25-year prison sentence.

Kevin K. Williams, 20, was sentenced to six years in prison and two years probation. He is not related to Nick Williams.

A third suspect and accused ringleader, McConney George, 19, is serving a 30-year sentence for an unrelated armed robbery at another Lafayette restaurant. George is scheduled to stand trial later this month for the same robberies to which Nick Williams pleaded.

Busch also ordered today that the four suspects pay a combined restitution of about $3,500. Nick Williams also must pay the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office $447 in transportation costs from his arrest in Chicago.

August 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL dad gets 10 years for neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former West Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to 10 years in prison for causing multiple broken bones that hospitalized his infant son a year ago.

Lucas "Wade" VanNote, now of Veedersburg, pleaded guilty in June in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

The plea came a day before VanNote was to stand trial.

"I love my two sons with all my heart," VanNote told Judge Thomas Busch during Wednesday's sentencing hearing. "The incident that happened was an accident.

"I wish I could go back and change what happened. ... I want to be the kind of father that my dad was to me."

One of his sons, Jayden VanNote, was 3 months old when he was rushed to St. Elizabeth Medical Center on April 15, 2008. The boy was then taken to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

Jayden had numerous injuries in various stages of healing -- implying that they were inflicted on several instances. They included at least three fractures to his right forearm, three fractures to his thighs and fractures to both shin bones.

VanNote admitted that he got angry and frustrated because Jayden was fussy and crying. The injuries were caused when VanNote yanked his son's arms and legs -- at times dangling the boy and dropping him onto a couch, said Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman.

Jayden's court-appointed special advocate, Sharon Cornell, testified Wednesday that VanNote has difficulty understanding how to parent. She is representing Jayden in a Child in Need of Services case in Tippecanoe County's juvenile court.

"At visitation, he was very awkward. ... He needed someone to tell him what to do," Cornell said. "He didn't appear to know how to do anything, even holding the baby."

VanNote's attorney, Kirk Freeman, said his client has long suffered from a learning disability that sometimes

causes him to react out of frustration.

"Right up front, we have to acknowledge that what happened was horrific," Freeman said. "... I think Wade's sentence should be one that shows it was not the proper way to lash out but one that also instructs him on better ways to act and parent."

Jayden's mother, Laura Brooks, testified on VanNote's behalf, urging that he get help with anger issues and parenting.

The judge, however, pointed out that VanNote has shown no improvement through services already offered to him.

"These are not the kind of injuries that are inflicted by mistake," Busch said. "There's a high level of danger in letting you care for children."

He also ordered that VanNote have no contact with Jayden.

Both Cornell and Brooks said that Jayden does not appear to have any lingering or long-term injuries.

VanNote's second son with Brooks was born after Jayden was hospitalized.

August 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Baby sitter sentenced for injuring toddler

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman was sentenced Tuesday to four years on community corrections and two years on probation for injuries a friend's toddler-age son suffered while in her care.

Karla M. Culley, 26, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony -- admitting she never took the boy, 20 months, for medical treatment.

His injuries included an occipital skull fracture, or a break in the bone at the base of his skull, and bruises on his face and ears, consistent with blows to the face, according to court documents.

Culley baby-sat the boy for 11 days in August 2008.

"I'm sorry for everything, and I would like to get some real help," she told Judge Thomas Busch during Tuesday's sentencing hearing.

According to court documents, Culley told investigators that other times when she watched the boy, he always had bruises before being in her care.

She explained that other injuries were caused when the boy fell down concrete steps and when he tripped over a toy, hitting his face on the linoleum.

The boy was treated at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis and later released.

Culley's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, suggested Tuesday that part of Culley's sentence be served at a structured rehabilitation facility.

Culley, who suffers from substance abuse, was admitted to Home with Hope in Lafayette shortly after pleading guilty. But she was rejected after testing positive for drugs about three weeks later.

"You're on the shortest, thinnest of ropes," Busch told Culley.

Time served on community corrections was part of Culley's plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Busch also ordered that Culley, herself a mother, take parenting classes and not be responsible for the care of any child under 12 without prior approval from her probation officer.

"I'm very concerned about your position of trust and injuries to the victim," the judge said. "You're fortunate ... that his injuries were not worse."

August 1, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Cocaine in car nets 20 years, deportation

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man sentenced Friday to 20 years in prison for possession of cocaine faces deportation from the United States after his release.

Mario H. Zavaleta, 33, pleaded guilty to the Class A felony in May in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. Judge Don Daniel ordered Friday that Zavaleta serve 10 years on probation.

The charges stemmed from a traffic stop in February for disregarding a traffic light on Earl Avenue.

Zavaleta was found to have a suspended license. Searching his vehicle, police found 5.4 ounces of cocaine, $791 in cash and an electronic scale.

The cocaine has a current street value between $5,000 and $6,000.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Zavaleta also was using another person's Social Security number. He said his office is trying to track down whose number was stolen.

Harrington said authorities must now ensure that Zavaleta's conviction is not associated with the Social Security number, should that person still be living and be falsely linked to Zavaleta's criminal record.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement placed a hold on Zavaleta, meaning he will likely be deported.

Daniel ordered that Zavaleta cannot return to the U.S. after he is deported.

July 31, 2009: WLFI TV

Split decision in attorney attack case
Russell Timmons charged with attempted murder

Updated: Friday, 31 Jul 2009, 11:46 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 30 Jul 2009, 6:31 PM EDT

•Chris Morisse
•Julie Krizen
•Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - Jurors reach a split decision after six hours in the case of Russell Timmons. The 51-year old Lafayette man was accused of trying to push an attorney over a railing around the Tippecanoe County Courthouse rotunda. The Superior Court One jury found Timmons guilty of confinement resulting in bodily injury, but the panel decided Timmons is innocent of attempted murder and criminal battery.

During the week-long trial, jurors watched security video that shows him going after Fort Wayne attorney Linda Polley. Defense attorney Kent Moore argued Timmons was in an altered state of mind after a hearing about an insurance dispute. Polley represented the insurance company Timmons was taking to court in a dispute over $4,000. Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman contends Timmons intentionally singled out Polley after the hearing in June of 2007. Zeman said it can be difficult to convince jurors of intent to murder when the act is not completed.

"They concluded that they could not decide and could not be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt what his exact intent was. Hence, they would have to find him not guilty on those charges," she said.

Timmons remains free on bond. A sentencing date will be the first week of August. He faces a range of two to eight years in prison.

July 28, 2009: WLFI TV

Cocaine found in electrical outlet
Dijon Adams sentenced for dealing cocaine

Updated: Tuesday, 28 Jul 2009, 6:59 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 28 Jul 2009, 5:55 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - Members of the Lafayette Street Crimes Unit found crack cocaine hidden inside an electrical outlet in a Lafayette motel.

The bust was made as part of an investigation into drug activity involving Dijon Adams.

Harrington said Adams sold drugs to a member of the street crimes unit in December 2008.

"Officers then obtained a search warrant for a motel room that Adams had been staying," said Harrington. "Police found 28 grams of crack cocaine in an electrical socket at the former Benchmark motel on State Road 26 East."

The 23-year-old former Cook County man was sentenced Tuesday to 17 years in prison for his guilty plea to dealing cocaine.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Adams' sentence also includes three years of Community Corrections and five years probation.

July 27, 2009: WLFI TV

Burglar caught in underwear sentenced
Lamarr Thornton handed 14 year prison term

Updated: Tuesday, 28 Jul 2009, 6:58 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 28 Jul 2009, 6:44 PM EDT

•Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A man apprehended in his underwear after an apartment break-in was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

22-year-old Lamarr Thornton, of Indianapolis, pleaded guilty to Burglary and Theft/Receiving Stolen Property.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Thornton was a student at Purdue.

"The defendant told the judge he committed the burglary because he needed money for school," said Harrington.

Tippecanoe County Police arrested Thornton in November 2008 after residents of Campus Suites reported someone was taking items inside their apartment.

One person chased Thornton into some nearby woods. Initially, police were unable to locate him. A couple hours later, another resident spotted Thornton coming out of the woods in his underwear. Police chased him back into the woods, where they took him into custody.

The judge ordered Thornton to pay more than $5,500 in restitution. Police reported that a TV and guitars were taken from one apartment.

July 24, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 40 years for robbery

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 40 years in prison for holding up a Village Pantry at gunpoint.

Keith E. Simmons, 28, pleaded guilty but mentally ill last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class C felony, and being a habitual offender.

He was accused of holding up the Village Pantry at 1920 Main St. on March 7. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Simmons placed a bottle of alcohol on the counter and pointed a gun at the cashier.

No one was injured, but Simmons got away with $125.

Simmons was arrested after a Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputy, who was investigating an unrelated hit-and-run crash, got information that Simmons may be involved in the robbery.

July 18, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 60 years for killing ex-mate

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 60 years in prison for what prosecutors described as an execution-style killing of his ex-girlfriend.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit court to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, 46, admitting that he shot her multiple times.

The two were in a borrowed Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco. Santa Rosa's body was found on Lilly Road.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico -- where he was arrested 17 months ago during an unrelated gunfight with Mexican police -- after being on the lam for six years.

Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

In June 2002, about three months prior to Santa Rosa's death, Pacheco aimed a shotgun at Huerta and fired one round into the air. No one was injured then.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said it's believed that Pacheco spent those three months in Wisconsin plotting Santa Rosa's death.

He argued for an aggravated sentence.

"My position is that this was an execution-style murder," Harrington said, explaining that Pacheco fired eight shots and emptied his gun's clip.

"The fact that he pleaded guilty is mitigated because he fled international boundaries. ... He was not here legally and disregarded our justice system by violating the law."

Pacheco's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, said Pacheco believed he and Santa Rosa had a common law marriage and that his client was remorseful.

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Trueblood explained that a "culture component" likely contributed to the shooting because Pacheco was upset that Santa Rosa was dating someone else.

Sheriff's Lt. Steve Kohne, a blood splatter expert, testified that Pacheco's confession upon extradition was inconsistent with physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville.

Pacheco told investigators that Santa Rosa had agreed to meet that night to discuss their relationship. He said he shot Santa Rosa once while inside the vehicle, causing her body to partially fall outside.

He then pulled her body onto Lilly Road and fired several more rounds.

Kohne, however, testified that a pool of blood in the Pontiac's passenger seat indicated that Santa Rosa was beaten prior to the first shot.

He said it appeared that Santa Rosa was forced into the vehicle.

Huerta, the ex-boyfriend, attended Friday's hearing but did not testify. Harrington said Huerta approved of Pacheco's sentence.

Under a plea agreement, felony charges of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness related to the June 2002 incident were dropped.

Pacheco, a Mexican national, also faces deportation after his release.

He had faced between 45 and 65 years in prison. Judge Don Daniel agreed that aggravating factors presented by the state outweighed the fact that Pacheco accepted responsibility by pleading guilty.

July 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for 2002 murder
Tereso Pacheco will serve 60 years in prison

Updated: Friday, 17 Jul 2009, 5:06 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 17 Jul 2009, 1:08 PM EDT

•Julie Krizen

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man showed no emotion as a judge handed him down a 60 year sentence for murder. Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel sentenced 45-year-old Tereso Pacheco to 60 years in prison for killing Juanita Santarossa in 2002.

The 45 year old Lafayette man pleaded guilty to the fatal shooting of Santarossa. She was found dead along Lilly Road. Pacheco fled the area and was later apprehended in Mexico.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Pacheco was upset that Santarossa had a new boyfriend.

"As you heard in court, this was an execution. He took this lady from her place, drove her out to the wooded area, shot her once in the vehicle. Then drug her out of the vehicle and fired 7 more rounds into her head. This was an execution and I think the court rightly sentenced him to 60 years," said Harrington.

Harrington said once Pacheco completes his prison sentence, he'll be deported back to Mexico. Santarossa's boyfriend at the time of the murder was at the sentencing. He said he is glad Pacheco is in jail.

Pacheco's attorney said Pacheco wanted everyone to know his regret of the circumstances, and his remorse for causing pain to so many people.

July 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Shooter gets 60 years in death of ex-girlfriend

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man was sentenced today to 60 years in prison for fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body on a rural Tippecanoe County road.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrosa, 46.

He had faced between 45 and 65 years in prison.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico - where he was arrested 17 months ago during an unrelated gunfight with Mexican police - after being on the lam for six years.

Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

About three months prior to Santa Rosa's death, Pacheco reportedly aimed a shotgun at Huerta and fired a round into the air. No one was injured then.

Pacheco's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, said today that Pacheco believed he and Santa Rosa had a common law marriage.

Trueblood said a "culture component" likely contributed to the shooting because Pacheco was upset that Santa Rosa was dating someone else.

Sheriff's Lt. Steve Kohne, a blood splatter expert, testified today that Pacheco's confession upon extradition was inconsistent with physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville where Santa Rosa was shot.

He said Pacheco told investigators that he shot Santa Rosa once inside the vehicle and that she had partially fallen outside. He then pulled her body outside and fired several more rounds.

Kohne, however, believed that Santa Rosa was beaten prior to the first shot because of a pool of blood that filled the vehicle's passenger seat.

Blood from the gunshot struck the windshield.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington argued that Santa Rosa was killed in an execution-style shooting and that Pacheco plotted Santa Rosa's death in the months beforehand.

Pacheco, a Mexican national, faces deportation after he serves prison time.

For more on this story, read Saturday's Journal & Courier.

July 16, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

3 charged in Craigslist-linked robbery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

Investigators here plan to contact authorities in northwest Indiana to help locate three suspects in a Craigslist exchange that turned into an armed robbery earlier this month.

Eugene A. Hall, 49, of Gary; Edward D. Mercer, 27, of Hammond; and Jarrod E. Rodriguez, 26, of Gary were each charged today with six felony counts.

Warrants were issued out of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 for their rearrest.

The criminal allegations stem from a shooting July 1 outside a Subway restaurant at 3990 Indiana 38 E. in Lafayette. No one was injured, though at least six rounds were fired.

Here's what took place, according to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges:

Hall, Mercer and Rodriguez had arranged to meet in the Subway parking lot to purchase tires and rims listed on Craigslist from two Indianapolis men.

But after agreeing upon a purchase price of $3,100 and handing over the cash, two of the buyers pulled handguns and demanded the money back.

Guns were held to both victims' heads. One of them, Kyle Delord Bostic, also was armed.

Shots were then fired by both parties.

The Lafayette Police Department stopped a van that Hall, Mercer and Rodriguez were in shortly after on Indiana 38 East. Tires and rims allegedly taken during the exchange were in the back seat.

Officers found a revolver and ammunition near the road that a witness said the three men had discarded there.

Detective Mark Pinkard said today criminal charges will not be pursued against Bostic or the other victim, Courtney Robinson, because their shots were fired in self defense.

Bostic also was properly licensed for his firearm.

"We deemed it as a life-preserving measure on their part," Pinkard said.

Hall, Mercer and Rodriguez were arrested on July 1, but each was released from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $25,000 surety bond.

Each is charged with two counts of robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony; one count of

conspiracy to commit armed robbery, a Class B felony; two counts of intimidation, a Class C felony; and theft, a Class D felony.

Pinkard said the two parties did not know each other beforehand. They chose to meet in Lafayette because of its location halfway between northwest Indiana and Indianapolis.

July 16, 2009: WLFI TV

$10K grant could take byte out of crime

By DOROTHY SCHNEIDER/dschneider@jconline.com

Because there are no geographic boundaries to the Internet, local law enforcement officials have to worry about threats from sexual predators living a thousand miles away.

And even within the state of Indiana there are 1,600 convicted sex offenders, out of roughly 9,500 released statewide, who've failed to register with authorities.

"This is a high priority for us," Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

The county was awarded a $10,000 federal grant to help local law enforcement partner with the Internet Crimes Against Children task force. The money will be used for equipment and training in the prosecutor's office.

Sean Leshney, an investigator in the prosecutor's office, earned a master's degree from Purdue University in cyber forensics. He said using evidence from computers, cell phones and other electronic devices is critical in investigating and prosecuting crimes nowadays.

"It's amazing how much technology puts a leash on you," Leshney said, explaining how he's helped uncover text messages, digital photos and other electronic information that tie people to crimes.

Training facilitated by Purdue University has helped police in Lafayette, West Lafayette and the county sheriff's department learn how to process cyber forensic evidence at crime scenes.

"The benefit is being able to know how to look for criminal activity on a computer at a crime scene and maintain the evidence in an appropriate manner," said Sgt. Cindy Marion with the West Lafayette Police Department.

"There aren't too many crimes anymore that wouldn't involve the computer or some technology," she added.

Working with the Internet Crimes Against Children task force, Harrington said local law enforcement will help follow up leads that tie into Tippecanoe and surrounding counties.

But the grant funding will also boost his office's overall goal of creating a hi-tech crime unit, tying together all local police departments.

Because the departments already share resources, Leshney plans to take inventory of the equipment already in the county before buying new gear with the grant money. But he's already planning to invest in new technology to help with digital information recovery on cell phones.

July 14, 2009: WLFI TV

County joins search for sex offenders
State task force also targets web predators

Updated: Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 7:44 PM EDT

Published : Tuesday, 14 Jul 2009, 4:15 PM EDT

- Tom Harmeson

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County is joining the Indiana State Police in a national effort to track unregistered sex offenders and protect children from predators on the Internet.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said a $10,000 grant will give investigator Sean Lesney new computer equipment to monitor the web for crimes against children.

Harrington said Lesney will also aid state police in tracking down sex offenders who are not registered.

"There are those who are supposed to register as sex offenders and those people who do not, in Indiana it is estimated there are 1600 right now that we've lost track of out of the 9500 who have been released from Department of Corrections," Harrington said.

Harrington said Tippecanoe County will serve as a regional hub for the state police in this program.

He said the state began the task force to prevent Internet Crimes Against Children in 2005.

July 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in stabbing case

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A rural Tippecanoe County man stabbed another man a week ago after an argument that began over a missing television, court documents allege.

Jason J. Klinker, 20, was charged today with battery, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class D felony; and misdemeanor criminal trespass in connection to the July 7 incident.

He is being held without bond in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

The victim, Adam Jones, 25, was treated at Home Hospital for a stab wound to his chest and released. He also had cuts on his fingers, apparently from trying to deflect the blow.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Tuesday with the charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, Klinker had an arrangement with an acquaintance, Joshua Mitchell, in which they would trade a television back-and-forth between them.

Mitchell ended up buying a new TV sometime on July 7. But after returning home from playing golf with Jones, he discovered the TV was missing.

The two men then went to an apartment on Briarwood Court where Klinker stayed with his girlfriend. Mitchell told sheriff's investigators that he believed Klinker stole the TV.

All three were arguing when Klinker allegedly grabbed a knife from the kitchen. Jones, who told investigators he had never met Klinker prior to July 7, then went outside.

Mitchell and Jones said they were leaving in their vehicle when Klinker allegedly came outside, reached through the passenger window and stabbed Jones in the chest.

It was not immediately clear Tuesday whether Klinker did take Mitchell's television.

Klinker told investigators that held the knife to ward off Jones, who allegedly was armed with a T-ball bat.

July 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged for suspected sexual abuse in '90s

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man accused of sexually abusing a young girl whose family he baby-sat for on several occasions in the 1990s.

Michael Joseph Gaby, 40, was arrested this afternoon at a West Lafayette business where he works. He was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $50,000 surety bond.

The suspected victim, who is now 15, recently told a Lafayette School Corp. teacher that she was molested as a child, said Detective Joe Clyde of the Lafayette Police Department.

Gaby was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with a single count of child molesting as a Class A felony - the highest offense level in Indiana, under murder.

Indiana has no statute of limitations to prosecute Class A felonies, said Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Laura Zeman. Child molesting is a Class A felony if it involves allegations of penetration.

Her office, however, was not able to file charges from allegations of fondling because of a five-year statute of limitations for that type of crime.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the criminal charge, Gaby used to live in the same Lafayette apartment complex as the 15-year-old's family and baby-sat her.

She told investigators about an incident - believed to have occurred in 1997 or 1998 - in which Gaby touched her sexually and forced the girl to touch him sexually.

The girl said she was allegedly fondled by Gaby when she was 8 years old.

Clyde said one of the girl's older sisters had previously told their mother that the elder sister was inappropriately touched by Gaby.

The younger girl said she never disclosed what allegedly took place because their mother did not believe the older sister's story.

Charges could not be filed based on those allegations, again because of a five-year statute of limitations.

"We do believe that does help add to the younger sister's case, regardless," Clyde said.

According to the affidavit filed with the criminal charge, the 15-year-old told investigators that she began thinking about the alleged molestation after a recent sermon by her pastor on forgiveness.

A few days later, one of her classes discussed rape and a teacher noticed the girl became upset.

July 11, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged with sexual assault, battery

STAFF REPORTS

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man accused of sexually assaulting and later trying to run over a female acquaintance.

Thomas D. Duckworth, 22, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with confinement, criminal recklessness, strangulation, domestic battery and sexual battery. All counts are felonies.

Duckworth was released Thursday from jail on a $10,000 surety bond. A telephone number could not be found to reach him for comment.

Here's what happened, according to the probable cause affidavit:

The woman said Duckworth showed up at her home the morning of July 3 unannounced. He left after a Lafayette officer was called but showed up again 30 minutes later.

The woman said Duckworth dragged her by her hair into his vehicle and drove to a relative's home, where the alleged sexual assault took place.

After a family member came home, the woman said she left and started walking home. While on Indiana 26 East, near Faith Baptist Church, she heard and then saw Duckworth's vehicle quickly approaching her.

Duckworth told police the sex was consensual.

One of the charges against him is for an unrelated incident that day in which Duckworth is accused of throwing another female acquaintance, breaking her tailbone.

July 8, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect in shooting pleads guilty to lesser charge

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Gary man faces up to eight years in prison for helping his cousins carry out an armed robbery four years ago that nearly killed another man at a south Lafayette apartment.

Jarmone D. Davis, 24, pleaded guilty Tuesday to a lesser charge of assisting a criminal, a Class C felony -- mere hours after testimony in his jury trial for attempted murder began in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Attempted murder, a Class A felony, carries a sentencing range of 20 to 50 years incarceration.

The victim, Darius R. Ford, was shot seven times in what investigators described as a botched attempt to steal money and cocaine from Ford the night of June 30, 2005.

Ford was an acquaintance of Jarmone Davis' cousins, Rudolph Billups Schley, now 25, and Cordarow R. Davis, now 22. All three cousins were criminally charged.

"I was choking on my own blood. I was fatigued," Ford testified Tuesday, explaining how he tried to leave and get help after being shot.

The admitted former crack-cocaine dealer said he was walking into his upstairs apartment at 90 Bridgewater Circle, located in the Mill Creek subdivision off South 18th Street, when he heard a gun being cocked.

He said three men -- two carrying revolvers and the third carrying a larger Uzi-style gun -- then forced him inside and demanded money.

Ford testified that he immediately recognized Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis, though all three suspects wore hospital-type masks that covered their noses and mouths.

"I felt deep down inside that by recognizing who they were, those masks weren't for me," he said.

Ford was in his bedroom with Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis when he reached for a gun kept under his pillow and fired. They shot back, striking Ford in the head, arm, back and abdomen.

Billups Schley also was shot in the incident.

Jarmone Davis was standing outside the bedroom during the gunfire exchange. Ford estimated that the entire incident -- from being forced inside at gunpoint to trying to leave and get help -- transpired in roughly 60 seconds.

Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis were both called to testify against their cousin. Each already pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Jarmone Davis' plea came shortly after Billups Schley took the stand Tuesday. He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 26 by Judge Thomas Busch.

If Busch accepts the plea, the attempted murder charge and two Class A felony robbery counts would be dropped.

Jarmone Davis was represented by Gary-based attorney Scott King, who questioned why Ford did not tell the prosecutor's office that he was a crack cocaine dealer until last week.

King also alleged that Ford was having an affair with Cordarow Davis' girlfriend, but Ford denied it.

Investigators had been searching for Jarmone Davis since August 2006. He was arrested this past September in Lake County on the Tippecanoe County warrant.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe presented the case for the state.

July 8, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

16-year-old indicted for bomb threat at Purdue

STAFF REPORTS

A 16-year-old accused of making false bomb threats and other threats directed at Purdue University and several schools across the United States will be tried as an adult, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana announced today.

Ashton Lundeby was arrested March 6 by FBI agents at his home in Oxford, N.C., based on a juvenile criminal complaint. The U.S. Attorney's Office recently was granted a motion to have Lundeby tried as an adult.

Lundeby is accused in a three-count indictment of conspiring with others to place bomb threats online via voice Internet protocol software.

They are further accused of using online computer gaming accounts to watch and listen to police response to the threats in real time.

Universities and high schools with Web-based video surveillance cameras were targeted, according to the U.S Attorney's Office.

Purdue's West Lafayette campus was a victim twice.

On Feb. 15, several threats of a bomb on the second floor of the Mechanical Engineering building were made to university police. The building was evacuated and searched, and nothing suspicious was found.

Another call was placed on March 3, this time stating that an armed gunman was in the Computer Science building. Again, nothing suspicious was found.

Lundeby and the unnamed co-conspirators also are accused calling in a bomb threat at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne on Jan. 31.

Threats also were directed at two FBI offices, four universities and five high schools in various states.

The incidents were investigated by the FBI, the Purdue University Police Department and the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

July 7, 2009: WLFI TV

Shooting trial ends in guilty plea
Perjury investigation now underway

Updated: Tuesday, 07 Jul 2009, 5:43 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 07 Jul 2009, 4:43 PM EDT

- Jeff Smith

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The trial of a Gary man on charges related to the near-fatal shooting of another man in Lafayette four years ago ended Tuesday when a witness changed his story.

24 year old Jarmone Davis wasa charged with attempted murder, robbery, and conspiracy to commit robbery. Prosecutors said Davis was among a group of men who tried to rob Darius Ford of cocaine and money at Ford's home in the Mill Creek subdivision in June, 2005.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Ford was shot several times. During testimony on opening day of Davis's trial, Harrinigton said a witness testified that Davis was not there at the time of Ford's shooting. Davis plead guilty to a lesser charge of Assisting a Criminal.

Harrington said a perjury investigation is now underway involving the witness, who Harrington said had previously told prosecutors that Davis was involved in the shooting.

July 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

UPDATE: Shooting trial ends with Gary man's guilty plea

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Gary man faces up to eight years in prison for helping his cousins carry out an armed robbery four years ago that nearly killed another man at a south Lafayette apartment.

Jarmone D. Davis, 24, pleaded guilty today to assisting a criminal, a Class C felony - mere hours after testimony in his trial for attempted murder began in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Attempted murder, a Class A felony, carries a sentencing range of 20 to 50 years incarceration.

The victim, Darius R. Ford, was shot seven times in what investigators described as a botched attempt to steal money and cocaine from Ford the night of June 30, 2005.

Ford was an acquaintance of Jarmone Davis' cousins, Rudolph Billups Schley, now 25, and Cordarow R. Davis, now 22. All three cousins were criminally charged.

"I was choking on my own blood. I was fatigued," Ford testified this morning, explaining how he tried to leave and get help after being shot.

The admitted former crack-cocaine dealer said he was walking into his upstairs apartment at 90 Bridgewater Circle, located in the Mill Creek subdivision off South 18th Street, when he heard a gun being cocked.

He said three men - two carrying revolvers and the third carrying a larger Uzi-style gun - then forced him inside and demanded money.

Ford testified that he immediately recognized Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis, though all three suspects wore hospital-type masks that covered their noses and mouths.

"I felt deep down inside that by recognizing who they were, those masks weren't for me," he said.

Ford was in his bedroom with Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis when he reached for a gun kept under his pillow and fired. They shot back, striking Ford in the head, arm, back and abdomen.

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Jarmone Davis was standing outside the bedroom during the gunfire exchange. Ford estimated that the entire incident - from being forced inside at gunpoint to trying to leave and get help - transpired in roughly 60 seconds.

Billups Schley and Cordarow Davis were both called to testify against their cousin. Each already pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Jarmone Davis' plea came shortly after Billups Schley took the stand today. He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 26 by Judge Thomas Busch.

If Busch accepts the plea, the attempted murder charge and two Class A felony robbery counts would be dropped.

Jarmone Davis was represented by Gary-based attorney Scott King, who questioned why Ford did not tell the prosecutor's office that he was a crack cocaine dealer until last week.

King also alleged that Ford was having an affair with Cordarow Davis' girlfriend, but Ford denied it.

Investigators had been searching for Jarmone Davis since August 2006. He was arrested this past September in Lake County on the Tippecanoe County warrant.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe presented the case for the state.

For more on this story, read Wednesday's J&C.

July 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Web site for youth addresses gang issues

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

Teenagers and youth now have a Web site to share any concerns about gang presence in Tippecanoe County schools.

Students Against Gangs -- www.studentsagainstgangs.com -- is a partnership between the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's Project Safe Neighborhoods and Robert Walker, a former special agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

It is free to join and participate. The site officially launched Tuesday.

"It would be wonderful if we could have a youth program center on every side of the city. But since we don't, this gives kids a place to go and ask questions," said Kathryn Redd, coordinator of Project Safe Neighborhoods.

"Or they can just view and read the Web site to see what other kids are asking. It's not a law enforcement-based project or an intelligence gathering vehicle."

THE BACKGROUND

Project Safe Neighborhoods was launched in Tippecanoe County in May 2008.

The federal program is an anti-crime and anti-gang initiative that has been used in larger cities to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism.

Investigators have said that they've identified about 25 different gangs in the community that, combined, have more than 200 members.

Most identified gang members in recent years were in their teens or early 20s.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Redd said Students Against Gangs is open to everyone. But she specifically encourages youth and area law enforcement officers to sign up.

A valid e-mail address and a real name is required to register, but Redd said participants can post using a screen name. Private information will only be accessible by Redd and Walker.

"We want people to have the freedom to ask questions freely without fear," she said.

Students will be asked a series of questions at registration, including whether they have ever been in a gang or felt threatened by a gang.

Redd said the Web site will be made available nationwide.

July 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

3 held in Craigslist sale gone awry

By CURT SLYDER; cslyder@jconline.com

What started as a Craigslist transaction turned into an armed robbery and led to several shots being fired outside a Lafayette Subway restaurant Wednesday afternoon.

Police were called to the Subway at 3990 Indiana 38 E. shortly after 5 p.m. Wednesday.

According to Lafayette police Lt. Brad Hayworth, two people from Indianapolis who were trying to sell tires and

rims on Craigslist had arranged to meet three men from Hammond on Indiana 38 to make the transaction.

After settling on a price, two of the buyers pulled handguns as money was changing hands, Hayworth said.

"They demanded the money back," Hayworth said.

That led to a struggle during which several shots were exchanged between at least one of the suspects and one of the victims, who was also armed with a handgun, Hayworth said.

Nobody was injured.

The suspects managed to get away in their vehicle with the tires, rims and at least some of the money but were followed in another vehicle by a person who witnessed the incident, Hayworth said.

The witness phoned police, who stopped the vehicle moments later on County Road 350 South, Hayworth said.

Eugene A. Hall, 49; Jarrod E. Rodriguez, 26, and Edward D. Mercer, 27, all of Hammond, were arrested on suspicion of armed robbery, Hayworth said.

They were taken to the Tippecanoe County Jail where they were being held Thursday with bonds set at $25,000 surety each.

The victims have not yet been charged. Hayworth said details would be forwarded to the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office for possible filing of formal charges.

Experts warn that crimes related to Web sites such as Craigslist are becoming more common.

According to The Internet Crime Complaint Center, a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, online crime is at a record high.

In a March report, the center said the total dollar loss linked to online transactions was $265 million in 2008, about $25 million more than in 2007. The average individual loss was $931.

The complaint center advises people to not give their real names when buying or selling items online, and never agree to meet someone that you don't know.

The incident remains under investigation.

July 1, 2009: WLFI TV

2nd of 3 suspects in VP robbery sentenced

STAFF REPORTS

A Gary teenager was sentenced Tuesday to 10 years in prison for his role in an armed robbery at a Lafayette convenience store a year ago.

Michael McCullough, 17, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 in April to robbery, a Class B felony.

He was one of three people charged after the April 21, 2008, holdup at the Marathon Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue and U.S. 52 North.

McCullough, Stephen Baker, 23, and Dante J. Dillinger, 22, were arrested that day after an attempted armed robbery at the Petro truck stop at U.S. 24 and Interstate 65 in Remington.

During the traffic stop, officers spotted a sawed-off shotgun in the rear hatch of their vehicle. Investigators found a .357 magnum revolver in a subsequent search that they suspect was used in the robbery.

McCullough also was ordered Tuesday to serve two years on probation after his release. His 10-year sentence is in addition to a six-year sentence for conspiracy to commit armed robbery in Jasper County.

Baker pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe County to robbery, a Class B felony, and was sentenced in April to 10 years in prison.

Dillinger is scheduled to stand trial Sept. 1 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

All three suspects are from Gary.

June 30, 2009: WLFI TV

VP robbery leads to 10 year sentence
Michael McCullough pleads to robbery

Updated: Tuesday, 30 Jun 2009, 4:31 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 30 Jun 2009, 3:54 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Gary teenager is sentenced to 10 years in prison, followed by two years on probation, for his role in an armed robbery in Lafayette.

Michael McCullough, 17, pleaded guilty to Robbery in Tippecanoe Superior Court.

McCullough and two other men held up the Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue in April 2008.

McCullough was 16 years old at the time, but was waived into adult court.

Two other Gary men were arrested in the case. All three are accused of robbing the VP in Lafayette, then trying to hold up the Petro Trucking Center in Remington about 30 minutes later.

Jasper County Prosecutor Kathy O'Neall said the clerk told the men she had just changed the drawer and had no money. She said truck drivers chased the gunmen from the store. McCullough, Stephen Baker, 23, and Dante Dillinger, 22, were stopped on Interstate 65 shortly after the attempted robbery at the truck stop.

McCullough was sentenced to 6 years in prison for his guilty plea to Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery in Jasper County. Baker was ordered to serve 8 years in prison. Charges are still pending against Dillinger.

In the Tippecanoe County robbery, Stephen Baker was sentenced to 10 years in prison for the robbery. Dante Dillinger faces trial in September.

June 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Getaway driver gets 10 years in prison
Claudia Andrade also faces deportation

Updated: Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 4:37 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 4:32 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A federal judge has sentenced a former Delphi woman to 10 years in prison for bank robbery.

Claudia Andrade drove the getaway car after her ex-husband robbed the Fifth Third Bank on State Road 26 East in March 2008. Jorge Quintero, 40, fired a shot into the ceiling during the hold up. The couple was arrested after a high speed chase and a couple of accident on U-S 52.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington attended the sentencing hearing Monday in U.S. District in Hammond. He said the U.S. Attorney argued for a longer sentence because Andrade is in the country illegally. "And, she could not give a name that could be validated as accurate and belonging to her," said Harrington. "She also endangered others during the pursuit. She caused several accidents."

Last week, Quintero was sentenced in U.S. District Court in Hammond to more than 15 years in prison.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bank robbery suspect gets 10-year sentence

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Delphi woman accused of helping her ex-husband flee after an armed robbery at a Lafayette bank was sentenced today to 10 years in federal prison.

The woman - still only known as Jane Doe - caused several minor crashes as the Lafayette Police Department chased her Pontiac Aztec on Sagamore Parkway North the morning of March 1, 2008.

Just minutes earlier, a man had walked into Fifth Third Bank, 3620 Indiana 26 E., fired one round from a handgun into the ceiling and ordered everyone to the floor.

No one was injured. The man, later identified as Jorge Quintero, Jane Doe's ex-husband, got away with more than $20,000.

A federal jury found Jane Doe guilty of bank robbery by force or violence and unlawfully entering and remaining in the United States after a trial in U.S. District Court in late January.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington attended this morning's sentencing hearing in Hammond. He said Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall Stewart presented evidence showing that authorities have not yet been able to confirm Jane Doe's identity.

She gave Lafayette investigators the alias of Claudia Andrade-Martinez, Barbara Gonzales and Maria Carmen Alvarez.

"The name Claudia Andrade did come back as an actual person. But the photo was not the same as the defendant," Harrington said. "That means one of two things: either someone else is using her identity or she was lying."

Jane Doe and Quintero were arrested after the brief pursuit. She was driving.

Harrington said Immigration and Customs Enforcement also has a hold on Jane Doe, who is believed to be in the U.S. illegally. That means she likely will be deported upon release from prison.

Her Lafayette-based attorney, Tim Broden, could not be reached Monday for comment.

Quintero pleaded guilty in December to armed robbery, possession of a firearm by an illegal alien and

unlawfully entering and remaining in the U.S.

He was sentenced last week to nearly 16 years in prison and three years supervised release.

June 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Cocaine dealer sentenced to 18 years
Dashiell Gilbert pleads to dealing charge

Updated: Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:29 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:29 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -
A Chicago man is sentenced to 18 years in prison for selling cocaine in the Lafayette area.

Dashiell Gilbert, 35, pleaded guilty to Dealing Cocaine. The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office said Gilbert sold 5 grams of cocaine to an informant in January 2008. According to a news release, "After fleeing police, Gilbert was found with more cocaine and several hundred dollars, some of which was in marked bills from the sale of the cocaine to the informant."

Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said Gilbert's previous criminal history includes several arrests for Possession of Marijuana, convictions for the Unlawful Use of a Weapon on two separate occasions, Operating While Intoxicated, Theft and Escape.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 18 years in prison for cocaine bust

STAFF REPORTS

A Chicago man accused of selling 5 grams of cocaine to a police informant was sentenced today to 18 years in prison.

Dashiell R. Gilbert, 35, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine, both Class B felonies.

Charges against Gilbert stemmed from an investigation in January 2008 in which Gilbert tried to flee from police after the cocaine sale.

He was caught with more cocaine and several hundred dollars in cash, some of which were marked bills used in the controlled buy by the informant.

June 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Lafayette man sentenced for meth
Justin Stetler handed 8 year term

Updated: Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:17 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:17 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -

A Lafayette man is sentenced to 8 years in prison, followed by 4 years on Community Corrections for selling methamphetamine in the Lafayette area. Justin Stetler, 23, pleaded guilty to Dealing Methamphetamine.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office said Stetler was arrested in January after selling meth to a confidential informant. According to a news release from the the Prosecutor's office Stetler's prior criminal history includes convictions for Burglary, Possession of Marijuana, Residential Entry and Escape.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 8 years for meth deal

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to eight years in prison for selling methamphetamine to an undercover police informant.

Justin P. Stetler, 23, pleaded guilty May 29 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to dealing methamphetamine, a Class B felony.

Charges were filed following an investigation and his arrest in January.

Stetler also was ordered to serve four years on Tippecanoe County community corrections after his release.

June 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Judge hands molester 15-year term

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 15 years in prison for having sexual contact on several occasions with a young boy in his care.

Nathan D. Hawkins, 29, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of child molesting, each a Class C felony.

The victim, 7 years old when Hawkins was arrested in December, told investigators that the sexual abuse began nearly three years earlier.

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Hawkins sobbed as he apologized to the boy, the boy's family, his own family, Tippecanoe County courts and sheriff's investigators.

"I have so many apologies to give. ... There are no excuses," Hawkins said, reading a prepared statement. "These events should have never taken place. It's certainly not who I was raised to be."

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office began investigating after the boy's mother -- an acquaintance of Hawkins -- found photos last year of a naked boy on Hawkins' cell phone and a naked girl on a computer he used.

She then asked her son if he had ever been inappropriately touched. According to court documents, the 7-year-old gave different scenarios in which he was touched by Hawkins or was asked to touch himself.

The boy's grandmother testified Friday that he continues to be troubled by what took place and is scared to use the bathroom or shower alone.

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify alleged victims of sexual abuse or their family members.

"A little child's life has been altered, and it will be that way for the rest of his life," she said, urging Judge Randy Williams to hand down the maximum punishment allowed.

Williams agreed, ordering that Hawkins also spend one year on supervised probation after his release. The combined 16 years was recommended by Tippecanoe County's probation department.

The judge said he was disturbed by what took place given Hawkins background. Hawkins formerly was a corrections officer in Montgomery County, a sheriff's deputy in Marion County and worked with at-risk youth, according to information presented during Friday's hearing.

"Rightfully or wrongfully, it's a concern that I have," Williams said. "This young boy, more likely than not, trusted you."

Hawkins worked at the Community and Family Resource Center in Lafayette at the time of his arrest. Those duties included supervising high school-age children who were referred there through the juvenile court system.

The victim was not a client at the CFRC.

Hawkins' attorney, Tom O'Brien, argued for some of his clients' sentence to be served on house arrest. He said Hawkins' pleaded guilty so that the victim would not be forced to endure a trial.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman, however, said offenders convicted of child molesting cannot serve any portion of their sentence through community corrections -- the program through which house arrest is monitored.

Hawkins will have to provide his address and other identifying information for life to Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry after his release.

He also will have to abide by residency restrictions that prohibit sex offenders against children from living within 1,000 feet of a school, public park or youth program center.

Hawkins told Williams he plans to appeal his sentence.

June 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier ~ Editorial

Gangs will only move on if confronted

Gangs, in their basic form, are nothing more than an organized group of criminals, and criminals generally prey upon opportunities and weaknesses.

To combat crime, a community generally must reduce the opportunities for criminals to be successful and present a united front against them.

Project Safe Neighborhood, a county-wide effort to confront crime, means that Tippecanoe County is ahead of many Indiana communities.

Thursday's presentation on gangs in Tippecanoe County by sheriff detective Rob Rush should be a reminder that the community needs to remain vigilant, but it should not be a call to panic.

Gangs take advantage of divided communities and infect apathetic neighborhoods -- and fearful neighbors -- like a virus that spreads to other areas. If neighbors stand up against crime, the criminals grow weaker.

Neighborhood associations and neighborhood crime watches are powerful defenses. Project Safe Neighborhood helps coordinate these groups and serves as a bridge between residents and officials.

Project Safe Neighborhood is designed to empower neighbors, remove indifference and teach landlords how to

prevent would-be criminals from taking root in rental properties.

In essence, the project amounts to turning on the proverbial lights and watching the cockroaches scurry for cover.

If criminals or gangs are to be successful, a community must leave them alone.

If Greater Lafayette confronts them, criminals and gangs will move to another neighborhood that is more to their liking. Confront them often enough and in places throughout the community, and the criminals will abandon the area all together.

June 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen gets 6 years for having sex with girl, 13

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Thursday to six years in prison for having sexual contact with a 13-year-old girl on several occasions.

James W. Ratliff II, 18, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to a single count of child molesting as a Class B felony.

Ratliff originally was charged in juvenile court because he was 17 when the sexual contact began. He was waived in February to adult court.

The Lafayette Police Department began investigating in January after the girl told her mother that the two had sex on several instances between August and December 2008.

She turned 13 that August.

According to court documents, Ratliff told investigators that he did not realize it was illegal for a 17-year-old to have sexual contact with a 13-year-old.

Under his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, two additional counts of child molesting were dropped.

June 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged with seducing teen girl

Staff Reports

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man accused of having a sexual relationship with a teenager in his care, allegedly beginning when the girl was 14 years old.

She is now 19.

Eddy W. Ramey Sr., 42, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with three counts of sexual contact with a minor, a Class C felony; two counts of attempted child seduction, a Class D felony; and seven counts of child seduction, a Class D felony.

He was released Wednesday from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $10,000 surety bond.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office began investigating in April after the girl's grandmother reported "ongoing sexual contact" between the teen and Ramey.

Ramey was in a position of trust over the girl for several years, Detective Rob Rush said Thursday.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the criminal charges, the girl told an investigator with the Department of Child Services that it started with "tickling and wrestling" when she was 14.

That allegedly progressed to fondling and other sexual activity. The charges allege the sexual misconduct continued through 2008.

Ramey, however, reportedly told investigators that the first incident began when the girl was 161/2 years old.

June 23, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea entered in 2002 murder
Extradited from Mexico, Pacheco faces up to 65 years in prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man faces between 45 and 65 years in prison for fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body on a rural Tippecanoe County road nearly seven years ago.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty Monday morning to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

He was outfitted with a protective vest for the hearing in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17 before Judge Don Daniel.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico -- where he was arrested 16 months ago on unrelated offenses -- after being on the lam for six years.

Through a Spanish-language interpreter, Pacheco admitted Monday to shooting Santa Rosa multiple times with a handgun. The two were inside a Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco.

When asked by his court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, whether he meant to kill Santa Rosa, Pacheco at first quietly replied, "No."

He later replied that was his intent.

Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

About three months prior to Santa Rosa's death, Pacheco reportedly aimed a shotgun at Huerta and fired a round into the air. No one was injured.

Pacheco was briefly highlighted on two episodes of "America's Most Wanted" in July 2004 and October 2007 as authorities searched for him.

Neither Huerta nor members of Santa Rosa's family attended Monday's hearing. A telephone listing for an Edmundo Huerta in Lafayette went unanswered Monday afternoon.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he recently spoke with Huerta, who said he had not spoken to Santa Rosa's family in several months.

Attempts by his office and sheriff's investigators to reach Santa Rosa's family also were not successful.

"He said he is going to do his best to try and reach them," Harrington said of Huerta, explaining that the family may have moved to Mexico.

Physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco included blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges.

The vehicle was discovered abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after Santa Rosa's body was found dumped on Lilly Road.

Pacheco is charged in a separate case filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness related to the June 2002 incident involving Huerta.

If Judge Daniel accepts Pacheco's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, those charges will be dropped.

Huerta agreed to those conditions, Harrington said.

Pacheco, a Mexican national, also faces deportation after he serves time. The terms of Pacheco's sentence will be left up to Daniel.

Harrington said Pacheco was given a protective vest as a precaution, though no known threats were made against him prior to Monday's hearing.

June 22, 2009: WLFI TV

Guilty plea in 2002 murder
Tereso Pacheco sentenced in July

Updated: Monday, 22 Jun 2009, 1:45 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 22 Jun 2009, 1:08 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A seven year old murder case ends in a guilty plea. Tereso Pacheco, 45, pleaded guilty to the murder of Juanita Santarrossa.

Pacheco admitted to killing Santarrossa, 44, his former girlfriend, in September 2002. She was found dead along Lilly Road. She suffered gunshot wounds. Court records said Pacheco was upset that Santarrosa had a new boyfriend and he had threatened to kill her three weeks prior to her death. The Affidavit said the murder charge was based on DNA evidence from the car Pacheco was using. It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat.

Police said Pacheco fled the area and was arrested in Mexico in February 2008. He was extradited back to the United States a year later.

Pacheco faces up to 65 years in prison when he is sentenced in Tippecanoe Circuit Court on July 17th. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Pacheco also faces deportation after he completes the sentence.

June 22, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Pacheco pleads guilty to murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man faces between 45 and 65 years in prison for fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body on a rural Tippecanoe County road.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty this morning to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

During his appearance at Tippecanoe Circuit Court, Pacheco wore a protective vest, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17 before Judge Don Daniel.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico - where he was arrested a year ago on unrelated offenses - after being on the lam for six years.

Through a Spanish-language interpreter, Pacheco admitted in court today to shooting Santa Rosa multiple times with a handgun.

The two were inside a vehicle driven by Pacheco.

When asked by his court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, whether he intended to kill Santa Rosa, Pacheco at first quietly replied, "No."

Investigators alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

Neither Huerta nor members of Santa Rosa's family attended the guilty plea hearing this morning. Harrington said he recently spoke to Huerta, who said he had not spoken to Santa Rosa's family in several months.

"He said he is going to do his best to try and reach them," Harrington said, explaining that the family may have moved to Mexico.

Physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco included blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges.

The vehicle was found abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after the shooting.

Pacheco also is charged in a separate case filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness.

Those charges stem from an incident in June 2002 in which Pacheco is accused of aiming a shotgun at Huerta and firing a round into the air. If Judge Daniel accepts Pacheco's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, those charges will be dropped.

Harrington said Huerta agreed to that condition of the plea agreement.

June 20, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Religious card salesman arrested for robbery

By Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of reportedly threatening a detective and police officers who were trying to interview and arrest him in a robbery investigation.

Eric D. Sims, 36, was charged Thursday with robbery resulting in bodily injury, a Class B felony; intimidation on a law enforcement officer, a Class D felony; attempted battery by bodily waste, a Class D felony; and misdemeanor counts of resisting law enforcement and criminal mischief.

He was being held Friday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $75,000 surety bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, Sims is accused of stealing a personal check from and knocking down a woman who refused to purchase religious trading cards from him.

The woman told investigators that she was smoking outside her apartment last Sunday night when a man, later identified as Sims, approached her.

The responding officer to that incident recognized Sims as potential suspect based on the woman's description of a scar on his lower left leg and skin grafts on his left arm.

During an interview at the Lafayette Police Department the following day, Sims allegedly became combative and threatened to blow up the building.

While outside, as officers struggled to handcuff him, Sims reportedly banged his head on the hood of a patrol car, causing three to four dents.

Sims also is accused of spitting at Detective Cecil Johnson and, after being taken to St. Elizabeth Medical Center, lunging at and trying to bite a nurse.

He later apologized and told Johnson that he reacts badly when he takes medication and drinks alcohol.

Tippecanoe County's online court records -- as of Friday afternoon -- did not indicate which public defender has been appointed to represent Sims.

June 19, 2009: OUR TOWN

Prosecutor fights rising drug, gang problem

POSTED: Friday, June 19, 2009
By KEVIN HOWELL, OURTOWN.COM

LAFAYETTE -- Gangs and drugs, two interrelated issues in Tippecanoe County, are on the list of problem priorities for Prosecutor Pat Harrington to resolve.

The 51- year old, first term prosecutor has enlisted the help of law enforcement, community organizations, area

schools, and residents to combat those as well as other problems.

“When I ran (for office) I thought the prosecutor needs to be interactive with people and the community,” said Harrington in his fourth floor courthouse office.

To that end the Lafayette native, former defense attorney and former deputy prosecutor in Lake County, helped initiate programs involving the community.

WeTip, Project Safe Neighborhoods make impact

Starting with a Project Safe Neighborhood grant and hiring grant coordinator Kathy ‘Kat’ Redd, Harrington worked with landlords to help identify good tenants, to make their property safer, and to handle bad-tenant situations especially where criminal activity is involved.

Through those efforts, and with the ambition and drive of Redd, Harrington said, the WeTip Hotline was introduced.

“When Kat started working with landlords, she did focus groups with landlords, community leaders, people in the community and Neighborhood Watch programs. She discovered there was an opening in the system - people wanted to connect but didn’t want to call police because they might be identified,” Harrington explained. “They want to be involved but not to the extent there may be retaliation or to get involved in a legal matter.”

In May 2008 WeTip, an anonymous venue for reporting suspicious activity, went online and in the six-month period from September 2008-April 2009, 508 reports of criminal activity were called in - a 112 percent increase over the first eight month period.

Drugs, Gangs on the rise

There were 122 reports of drugs sales and trafficking, 122 reports of child endangerment, 63 drug abuse, 32 weapons, and 26 fugitive tips.

With reported drug activity, gang activity had also risen.

“We have more drug crimes now. If you look at statistics most crime is drug – driven either because of drug addicts or drug dealers,” said Harrington.

He cites a 48 percent increase in crack cocaine the last five years with 152 cases in 2008 compared to 38 four years ago.

“In my opinion, the reason we’ve had an influx of crack cocaine is it’s the popular street drug, and we’ve become a good market for Chicago – for lack of a better expression, Lafayette has been discovered by drug dealers,” Harrington said.

That’s also where gang activity seems to originate.

“Gangs are on the increase. Ten years ago this community didn’t have gangs, but with the change in demographics we’ve been discovered,” He said.

Currently 28 gangs are reported in Tippecanoe County, with about 1,000 to 1,500 members.

“We don’t have any home – grown gangs,” Harrington said. “They are coming in and recruiting.”

Harrington hasn’t stopped with Project Safe Neighborhood and WeTip.

He has gone into schools passing out 55,000 flyers to K-12 children last year on gangs, drugs and other crimes.

Cops Online is another program where police network with officers across the country online and to learn about gang and drug activity.

Getting message to community important

A similar program – Teachers Against Gangs – is being promoted where teachers go online for information from other teachers – "like a FaceBook for teachers."

Project Safe Neighborhood includes monthly meetings with school corporation representatives, gang investigators, school resource officers, and juvenile probation to talk about trends in schools, recruitment by gangs, and graffiti.

"It's informal to get the message to the people," Harrington explained.

Getting the message out to the community is also why Harrington became a member of the local NAACP.

"I knew Sadie Harper-Scott, the director, when she was at the Hanna Center. When she wanted to reestablish the NAACP she said 'Pat it would be really nice to have you join,'" Harrington said.

"It's for people of all color, and if you go through their training you get a wonderful experience about how people of all colors have advanced the civil rights of everyone.

"It's good because I can be present, go to meetings and hear issues and give my opinion on the issues – it's a valuable addition to the community, and a way to reach people with a need in the community."

The community is key, Harrington, also a high school basketball referee, said.

"When I ran, I thought the prosecutor had to be a spokesman for the community, be proactive in community policing and getting the community involved with the issues of safety – it's not a police community, it's our community," he said.

"We'll be successful because the community has gotten behind us."

June 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former WL man pleads guilty in brutal child neglect case

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A former West Lafayette man faces between six and 20 years in prison for causing multiple broken bones that hospitalized his 3-month-old son a year ago.

Lucas W. VanNote, 21, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

The plea -- done without the benefit of a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said -- came a day before VanNote was to stand trial.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 5.

VanNote's son, Jayden VanNote, suffered injuries that included at least four fractures to his right forearm, three fractures to his thighs and fractures to both shin bones.

Charges against VanNote were filed after the boy's mother took him to the emergency room at St. Elizabeth Medical Center on April 15, 2008, for a red and swollen left leg.

Jayden was later transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis. According to court documents, doctors

there told West Lafayette police investigators that some of his injuries were consistent with his arm and leg being jerked or yanked.

VanNote allegedly was angry because Jayden would not stop crying and kept spitting out his bottle.

Jayden has since been released from the hospital.

The family lived at the Country Villa Estates apartment complex on Yeager Road at the time. Tippecanoe County's online court records list VanNote's current address in Veedersburg.

VanNote, who was released from the Tippecanoe County Jail shortly after his arrest, was booked in again earlier this month because his bond was revoked.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said he recently was caught climbing out of Jayden's mother's apartment window at Country Villa.

The apartment complex had told him not to go on its property, Zeman said. VanNote is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 with resisting law enforcement and trespassing in that incident.

June 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL man pleads guilty to thefts

STAFF REPORTS

Lamarr R. Thornton, 22, of West Lafayette pleaded guilty Friday to two counts of burglary and four counts of theft in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Those charges stem from a string of thefts last fall that were linked to Thornton in December when police found dozens of stolen items in his apartment, including 40-inch and 46-inch televisions, jewelry, laptop computers, game systems, a bag of diet dog food and a bottle of bourbon.

Before Thornton's December arrest, he was apprehended in November after being spotted taking items from another apartment. He initially eluded police by running into a wooded area, where his clothes became wet. After shedding his clothes, he was caught wearing only his underwear.

He is scheduled to be sentenced July 28.

June 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 8 years in robberies

STAFF REPORTS

Kevin K. Williams, 19, of Lafayette was sentenced Thursday to eight years in prison for his role in the armed robberies of a gas station and restaurant in March 2008.

Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Williams to serve six of those years in the Department of Correction and suspended two years, to be served on probation, according to Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey.

He was one of four men involved in two holdups at Long John Silvers, 2839 Teal Road, and Citgo Gas Station, 999 S. Creasy Lane, on March 8, 2008.
According to McVey, Williams drove the other three men -- McConney George, Shamone Evans, and Nick Williams -- to Long John Silvers. The men used BB guns during the course of the robbery and allegedly struck four

of the five employees while inside.

About 15 minutes later, Williams drove the group to the Citgo gas station, where two of the three people inside were injured or struck and BB guns were used again.

Williams pleaded guilty this March and was sentenced on two counts of conspiracy to commit robbery, a Class C felony, and two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

Evans pleaded earlier and was sentenced in December to 30 years, 25 of them to be executed. Williams entered a guilty plea in May and remains to be sentenced.

George requested a jury trial, which has been scheduled for Aug. 25.

June 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 12 years for injury to son

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Monon man was sentenced Friday to 12 years in prison for inflicting a serious head injury that caused blood to pool around his infant son's brain.

Dustin M. Rodgers, 20, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony. He also pleaded guilty to theft, a Class D felony, in an unrelated case originally filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Rodgers' son, Ethan Rodgers, was 8 weeks old when he was rushed to Home Hospital in early December for vomiting and unusual body movements. The boy was then transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

"It's a terrible thing, the number of lives ruined by the conduct you displayed," Judge Don Daniel told Rodgers after handing down the sentence.

Rodgers also was ordered to serve two years on community corrections and two years on probation, along with taking a parenting course.

According to court documents and information presented during court hearings, Ethan was born nine weeks early. He was hospitalized for nearly a month for the head injury caused when Rodgers admitted to getting frustrated by his son's crying. Ethan suffered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain, that appeared consistent with shaken baby syndrome.

Investigators with the sheriff's department believe the incident happened at the family's former residence in eastern Tippecanoe County sometime between Nov. 28 and Dec. 1 -- just days after the boy's mother, Aerial Rodgers, returned to work.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Rodgers had insisted that Ethan was injured while Rodgers bounced his son on his knee.

Rodgers' attorney, Tom O'Brien, told the judge that it's unclear whether Ethan suffered any long-term damage and that the boy passed recent neurology tests.

Rodgers was given a combined 302 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

June 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury convicts man of stabbing brother

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces a number of years in prison for slicing his brother's neck during an argument late September, missing an artery by a fraction of an inch.

After a two-day trial, David E. Wilson, 53, was found guilty Wednesday night of battery by means of a deadly weapon; battery resulting in serious bodily injury; and criminal recklessness, all Class C felonies.

He was found not guilty of the most serious offense, aggravated battery, a Class B felony.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury deliberated for about three hours before returning its verdicts. Judge Thomas Busch was presiding late Wednesday over a hearing on whether David Wilson should be deemed a habitual offender.

A date for his sentencing hearing was not immediately available.

David Wilson's brother, Steven Wilson Sr., 55, suffered a wound to the left side of his neck that measured 3 inches long and a half-inch wide. He needed stitches both inside and outside his neck at St. Elizabeth Medical Center. "He walked toward me and grabbed me," Steven Wilson testified Tuesday, using a piece of wood to demonstrate how the 12-inch kitchen knife was pulled along his throat. "He cut me deeply. ... I was trying to get out of there."

Steven Wilson also suffered fractures to his nose, jaw, ribs and an ankle. The knife wound missed an artery by less than 2 millimeters.

Officers with the Lafayette Police Department were called just after midnight Sept. 10 to Fowler Apartments, 407 Ferry St., where David Wilson resided.

In the lobby, they found Steven Wilson injured and David Wilson on the floor nearby. Jurors on Tuesday watched video surveillance from the apartment building's lobby, which began with Steven Wilson calling 911 for help. David Wilson is then seen coming off the elevator and knocking the phone out of his brother's hand. The two men were then seen wrestling on the floor.

Steven Wilson was unconscious when police arrived. He told investigators that he and a female friend were visiting his brother when David Wilson got angry and told them to leave.

David Wilson's attorney, Tom O'Connor, said that his client believed that his brother and friend had ransacked his bedroom, reportedly looking for money and pills. Investigators, however, could not substantiate that claim. The group had been drinking that morning. "He thought they were the police," O'Connor said, referring to Steven Wilson and the female friend. "It was a combination of alcohol and paranoia and prior violence."
David Wilson did not testify. O'Connor also argued that Steven Wilson's version of what had happened had inconsistencies.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe presented the case for the state. He argued that David Wilson may have been jealous of his older brother, noting that the defendant told officers that he wished Steven Wilson was dead.

June 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in apartment complex shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Two people fired rounds during a shooting last month that prompted authorities to evacuate some buildings at the Country View Estates apartment complex, court documents reveal.

The information was disclosed in a probable cause affidavit filed Tuesday with criminal charges against one of the suspected shooters, Justin Cook.

Cook, 24, of Chicago, has been sought since the May 12 incident. He is charged with carrying a handgun by a convicted felon, a Class C felony, and a warrant was issued Tuesday for his arrest.

"It's hard telling where exactly he is now," said Detective Bragg McDole of the Lafayette Police Department. "We think he travels back and forth between here and Chicago. ... He has access to various vehicles."
The other suspected shooter, Darrell Carter of Lafayette, was not arrested, McDole said. Investigators spoke with him on May 13, and Carter turned over a .38-caliber handgun police suspect was used.

Cook is accused of getting into an argument the afternoon of May 12 with Aaron Harrison, 26, for unknown reasons. Investigators believe he fired about five rounds, allegedly directed at Harrison and members of Harrison's family.

No one was injured.

Harrison and Carter are related. A home telephone number could not be found to reach Carter for comment. Dozens had gathered to watch behind yellow police tape as Lafayette's SWAT team searched several apartment buildings for Cook for nearly five hours.

Witnesses had said that Cook ran into an apartment on Keyes Court in Country View, although it was later determined he likely fled the apartment complex within minutes of the shootings, in which no injuries occurred.

According to the affidavit filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, Harrison referred to Cook as a former friend. Neighbors and witnesses told investigators that Harrison and Cook have fought on prior occasions.

McDole said investigators did not learn about the second shooter until two to three hours after the shooting, based on witness accounts. Police also found shell casings located a good distance from where Cook had been standing. Carter told them he was inside a nearby apartment when he heard gunshots. He admitted to going outside and firing three rounds at Cook, who reportedly had just fired two rounds.

The charge against Cook is based on prior convictions in Cook County, Ill., for possession of a controlled substance and distribution of a look-alike substance, both felonies.

"As soon as we locate Mr. Cook and obtain his side of the events that took place, we will review the charges again," Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

June 3, 2009: WLFI TV

Bookkeeper admits to library theft
Kimberly Helms pleads guilty

Updated: Wednesday, 03 Jun 2009, 5:03 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 03 Jun 2009, 11:40 AM EDT

Sue Scott

MONTICELLO, Ind (WLFI) - A former bookkeeper has pleaded guilty to stealing more than $25,000 from the Monticello-Union Township Library as well as $5,000 from a local soccer association.

38-year-old Kimberly Helms of Monticello pleaded guilty to forgery and theft Tuesday in White Superior Court.

Special Prosecutor Pat Harrington of Tippecanoe County said Helms admitted taking money for her own personal use when she worked at the library from March 2006 to January 2008.

The Affidavit of Probable Cause said an audit revealed 21 canceled checks written to Helms for sums totalling $14,490, as well as 4 canceled checks written by Helms to her own personal credit card accounts, and a check for $810.28 to a individual for home repairs made to Helms' residence.

In addition, James Reed, an auditor with the Indiana State Board of Accounts, said there were multiple unauthorized purchases made with the Monticello-Union Township Library credit card. Court records said Helms admitted to the unauthorized personal use of the credit card.

Harrington said Helms also admitted to taking about $5,000 from the Twin Lakes Soccer Association. Helms was Treasurer of the organization in 2007 and 2008. Harrington says Helms has already repaid those funds.

Helms faces up to 11 years in prison when she is sentenced July 24 in White Superior Court.

May 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect to enter plea in murder

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man accused of fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body along a Tippecanoe County road is expected to enter a guilty plea June 22.

Tereso Pacheco, 45, is charged with murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

He was extradited in February from Mexico -- where he was arrested a year prior on unrelated offenses -- after being on the lam for six years.

Pacheco had been scheduled to stand trial June 16 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. The guilty plea hearing was scheduled Friday morning by Pacheco's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, and Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Investigators alleged that Pacheco was jealous of Santa Rosa's new boyfriend.

Physical evidence, including blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges, suggested that Santa Rosa may have been shot inside a Pontiac Bonneville that Pacheco was driving.

The vehicle was found abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after the shooting.

Pacheco also is charged in a separate case in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness.

Those charges stem from an incident in June 2002 in which Pacheco is accused of aiming a shotgun at Santa Rosa's then-boyfriend and firing a round into the air. That case is scheduled for a June 23 jury trial.

May 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Murder suspect scheduled to plead
Tereso Pacheco accused in 2002 death

Updated: Friday, 29 May 2009, 3:06 PM EDT

Published : Friday, 29 May 2009, 12:49 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A man accused of killing his former girlfriend in Tippecanoe County seven years ago is now scheduled to plead guilty to the crime.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Tereso Pacheco, 45, is not longer scheduled for trial next month. He is now expected to plead guilty on June 22nd.

Pacheco is charged with the September 2002 shooting of Juanita Santarrossa, 43. She was found dead along Lilly Road. Pacheco fled the area and was arrested in Mexico in March 2008. He was returned to the United States in February 2009.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor filed the charge in connection with the fatal shooting of Santarrossa. Court documents show the murder charge is based on DNA evidence from a green Pontiac Pacheco was using.
It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat. Lab tests show that a sample taken from the passenger seatbelt matched the victim's DNA profile. Court records also state that two 22-caliber cartridges were found in the car and that blood spatters are consistent with someone having been shot inside the vehicle.

May 20, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen arsonist gets 20 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Tuesday morning to 20 years in prison for several crimes, including setting fire to the home of a family with whom he once lived.

Michael J. Crider, 19, also must spend five years on probation and pay $364,540 in restitution, Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 ordered.

Crider pleaded guilty in April to arson, a Class B felony; burglary, a Class B felony; two counts of forgery, a Class C felony; fraud on a financial institution, a Class C felony; and four counts of auto theft, a Class D felony. The charges were part of five separate, unrelated cases against him.

According to court documents, Crider was accused of taking items from and then setting fire to a house at 3918 Kensington Drive in June 2007, causing serious damage. The homeowners were on vacation at the time.
Crider, who used to live with the homeowners, was identified as a suspect in the arson after the Lafayette Police Department began investigating him for other crimes.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Crider told detectives he stole the items -- starting a fire to cover the burglary -- because he owed a gang money for his alleged crack cocaine addiction.
Following are the crimes to which Crider also pleaded:
☐ Posing as an employee at Payless Auto Sales, 3106 Sagamore Parkway S., and selling five vehicles as "junk" vehicles for $1,000 in March 2008.

☐ Depositing checks for several thousand dollars that he did not have from one checking account at a Lafayette bank into another in early 2008.

☐ Using paycheck stubs from his girlfriend's mother to make "check-by-phone" payments for his credit card bill in October and November 2007.

Through his attorney, John Sorenson, Crider told Busch that he does not plan to appeal his sentence -- though it would be allowed under his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office.

Several members of Crider's family attended Tuesday's sentencing hearing and asked if the teenager could hug his infant son goodbye.

"He's in the custody of the sheriff now," Busch said, "and I don't believe the sheriff's rules permit that."
Crider was given a combined 768 days credit for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

May 19, 2009: WLFI TV

Drug debt led teen to arson, robbery
Crider sentenced to 20 years

Updated: Tuesday, 19 May 2009, 4:28 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 19 May 2009, 4:28 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A teenager said he owed a lot of money to a gang for crack cocaine, which is why he stole items from a Lafayette house, then set the place on fire.

19-year-old Michael Crider pleaded guilty to charges in three separate cases including arson and burglary.

He was sentenced today to 20 years in prison.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington says Crider broke into a house on Kensington Drive in June 2007.

He took computers, a television and jewelry from the house, then started a fire to cover up the crime.
The homeowners were out of state on vacation.

The judge ordered Crider to pay more than $364,000 in restitution.

In the other cases, Crider stole cars from two dealerships.

Two of the cars were stolen from a Bob Rohrman dealership. They were test driven and not returned. They were left abandoned along the side of the road when they ran out of gas.

Crider also stole three cars from Payless Auto Sales and resold them. The prosecutor said he forged titles when he sold the vehicles.

May 15, 2009: WLFI TV

Rapist sentenced to 32 years in prison
Steven Chavez convicted of rape

Updated: Friday, 15 May 2009, 5:00 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 15 May 2009, 4:43 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man is sentenced to 32 years in prison for breaking into a woman's house and raping her.

Steven Chavez, 24, pleaded guilty to Rape and Burglary. In July 2008, Chavez attacked a women that he knew who lived near downtown Lafayette. Police said Chavez removed a window air conditioning unit to get inside the woman's house around 3:00 a.m. During the incident, Chavez took the woman's young child and tied the door shut to the child's room. When a 911 tape was played for the judge, the victim told police the attacker had

threatened to kill her.

The sentence in the Rape and Burglary case includes 32 years in prison, followed by six years on probation. The first four years of that probationary period will be spent on Community Corrections. The judge added another thee and half years in prison to the sentence because Chavez was on probation for Intimidation at the time.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Chavez has prior convictions for Possession of Marijuana, Intimidation, and Resisting Law Enforcement. He said Chavez must register as a violent sexual offender and must follow lifetime residency restrictions.

May 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 32 years for rape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 32 years in prison for breaking into the home of a female acquaintance last summer and sexually assaulting her.

Steven R. Chavez, 24, also was ordered to serve three years and six months in prison for violating his probation in an unrelated intimidation conviction.

After his release, Chavez must spend four years on community corrections and two years on probation, Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 ordered.

The victim did not attend Friday's sentencing, though she wrote a letter to the court.
Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said the woman wanted Chavez to serve time behind bars in hopes that he would not assault anyone else.

Chavez was accused of breaking into the woman's residence on South Third Street on July 25. According to court documents, the woman was in her bedroom when she heard someone trying to open the locked door.

After yelling that she was going to call police, the suspect charged into the room and attacked her. He then shut the woman's 3-year-son in another bedroom by tying shoelaces to the doorknob and a nearby stair well.

The woman was forced into the bathroom, where she was raped.

Chavez was identified as a suspect because the woman recognized his voice and, when outside later, noticed a vehicle that matched Chavez's behind her home.

The two had known each other for years.

Chavez pleaded guilty in April to rape and burglary, both Class B felonies - sparing himself a trial for rape as a Class A felony, which carries a more severe sentencing range.

During Friday's hearing, Chavez said that his father - allegedly an alcoholic - is serving prison time in Texas. Chavez said he also struggles with alcohol abuse but is trying to raise three children.

Under his plea agreement, Chavez cannot appeal his convictions or file for post-conviction relief.

After his release, Chavez must register as a sexually violent predator, meaning he will have to provide law enforcement his address for the state's Sexual and Violent Offender Registry for life.

May 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dealer to serve 20-year term

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced Thursday to 20 years in prison for dealing cocaine and for being a habitual substance offender.

Deon R. Harris, 29, pleaded guilty to both offenses in December in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.
Harris was arrested on March 3, 2008, after a joint investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit and the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Harris, who originally is from Indianapolis, has prior convictions for battery, carrying a handgun without a license, possession of cocaine and possession of marijuana.

May 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

South side drug dealer gets 35 years

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 35 years in prison for selling cocaine to a police informant out of his home on the city's south end.

Juan C. Gonzalez, 24, was found guilty in January of three counts of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; two counts of possession of cocaine as a Class A felony; and one count of possession of cocaine as a Class B felony.

The jury trial was held over two days in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Charges against Gonzalez stemmed from a lengthy investigation by the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force and the Indiana State Police drug enforcement section, which was focused on people believed to be major players in narcotics sales in the community.

Gonzalez was arrested in April 2008.

He was accused of selling more than nine grams of cocaine to a police informant on three separate occasions and of selling a 9 mm handgun and a .38-caliber revolver.

Kristen McVey, Tippecanoe County chief deputy prosecutor, said Gonzalez has been unemployed since 2004 and supported himself by selling drugs and guns.

She said all three drug sales of which Gonzalez was convicted occurred between 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Gonzalez's former Ottawa Drive home is located near Miami Elementary School, Kennedy Park and the Lyn Treece Boys and Girls Club.

However, even without proximity to a school or park, dealing more than three grams of cocaine is a Class A felony under Indiana law.

May 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 charged in connection to attempted robberies

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Suspects in at least two home invasions and attempted robberies at gunpoint told investigators that the weapons

they used were toy firearms, court documents reveal.

Six men were charged Wednesday with numerous felonies in connection with a residential armed robbery April 10 in rural West Lafayette and a home invasion April 18 in Lafayette that ended with shots fired.

Capt. Bruce Biggs, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's detectives division, said Wednesday that more arrests are possible. He said the suspects are believed to be involved with other robberies and home invasions that were not reported to authorities.

"We learned this through the investigation of the two crimes we did know about," Biggs said. "But unfortunately, those victims have not come forward."

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, the men are accused of conspiring to rob people whom they knew to be involved in drug trade in the Lafayette area.

A victim in the April 10 residential robbery, which was investigated by the sheriff's department, was arrested April 7 on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance and dealing marijuana.

In that incident, four armed men forced their way inside a home on Indiana 26 West, bound a man and a woman with duct tape and took off with electronics and the woman's purse, according to the affidavit.

On April 18, four armed men forced their way into an apartment in the 1700 block of Vinton Street and tied up three men inside with electrical cords. After realizing they were at the wrong address, they forced a female tenant at gunpoint to a nearby apartment. They fled when a tenant there fired rounds from a gun.

The following men have been identified as suspects:
☐ Charles Erik Moritz, 21, of West Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery by means of a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

☐ Dayna M. Alvarez, 24, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery by means of a deadly weapon, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

Charges initially filed last week against Alvarez, who was found in Monroe County, were dismissed.

☐ Randall C. Belmont Jr., 26, of West Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery by means of a deadly weapon, both Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

☐ Tradell S. Marzette, 23, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies.

☐ Cecil Trey Johnson III, 23, of Clarks Hill is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery by means of a deadly weapon, both Class B felonies. He also is charged with burglary, a Class C felony, and two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

The burglary charge stems from a break-in last week at Parkside Pharmacy in Lafayette. Information he provided, along with information from acquaintances of the other suspects, helped lead to the arrests.

☐ Sylvario T. Wilson, 22, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

Everyone but Moritz -- who posted bond last week -- remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail late Wednesday on a $250,000 surety bond. An arrest warrant was issued Wednesday for Moritz's re-arrest.
According to court documents, suspects told police they used toy guns, such as BB guns, in the holdups.

May 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dad pleads guilty in shaken baby case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Monon man faces between six and 20 years in prison for inflicting a serious head injury that caused blood to pool around his infant son's brain.

Dustin M. Rodgers, 20, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

Ethan Rodgers was 8 weeks old when he was rushed to Home Hospital in early December for vomiting and unusual body movements. Rodgers admitted that he got frustrated with the boy and tried to discipline him. "My wife went to work. I had care of Ethan," Rodgers said in response to questions asked by his attorney, Tom O'Brien. " ... He was crying for about 45 minutes straight."

Sentencing is scheduled for June 5 before Judge Don Daniel. Rodgers did not explain how he disciplined the boy. Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department believe the incident happened sometime between Nov. 28 and Dec. 1 -- just days after the boy's mother, Aerial Rodgers, returned to work -- at the family's former residence in eastern Tippecanoe County.

According to court documents, Ethan was born nine weeks early and hospitalized for nearly a month. At the time that he was injured, it was about a week after his full-term due date.

Ethan suffered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain, that appeared consistent with shaken baby syndrome. He also had retinal hemorrhages.

Rodgers has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since Jan. 9.

He also pleaded guilty Friday to an unrelated theft filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5. He admitted to stealing from an area Wal-Mart last September.

If the judge accepts Rodgers' plea with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, sentencing on the theft offense, a Class D felony punishable by six months to three years in prison, would run concurrently with his sentence for neglect of a dependent.

Ethan, who was taken to Riley Hospital for Children after initial treatment at Home Hospital, has since been released from medical care.

May 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Enhanced charge filed in child's death

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man suspected of causing the death of his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter has now also been charged with being a habitual offender.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed the charge Friday against Thomas A. Dexter, 31. If convicted, the habitual offender status would enhance his sentence by a number of years in prison.

Dexter is charged with neglect of a dependent, a Class A felony, in connection with the death of Kimberly "Kimmy" Snow. The Lafayette toddler died Tuesday at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis. She had been hospitalized in critical condition with severe brain trauma for five days.

The prosecutor's office filed the habitual offender allegation based on two prior felony convictions Dexter

received in Tippecanoe County courts. He was sentenced to four years in May 2000 for theft and to four years for residential entry and theft in April 2005.

May 8, 2009: WLFI TV

5 arrested in 2 similar robbery cases

Updated: Friday, 08 May 2009, 2:12 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 08 May 2009, 10:45 AM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A joint investigation into two armed robbery cases has yielded five arrests.

For the past several weeks, detectives from the Lafayette Police Department, the West Lafayette Police Department, and Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department have been working together on a joint investigation of two similar armed robberies.

The first robbery under investigation took place on April 10 on the 2000 block of State Road 26 West. Four men forced their way inside a home, asked where money was located. They tied up the occupants, a man and a woman. After the robbers left, the occupants were able to untie themselves and contact police.

The second robbery took place on April 18 on the 1700 block of Vinton Street in Lafayette. Four armed men forced their way into an apartment and tied up three men inside the residence. The robbers questioned their captives, asking where drugs were located, but then realized they had entered the wrong apartment.

The robbers forced a woman in the apartment to try to contact the occupants of a second residence, where robbers believed drugs were present. When the woman attempted to make contact, a shot was fired from the second residence and the suspects fled the area.

Sylvario Wilson was arrested in connection with both robberies, on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery. Dayna Alvarez and Charles Moritz were also arrested in connection with both robberies on a charge of Armed Robbery. Randall Belmont, Jr. was arrested in connection with the April 10 robbery, on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery. Tradell Marzette was arrested in connection with the April 18 robbery on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery.

The police investigation into these cases continues.

May 7, 2009: WSBT South Bend

U.S. attorney addresses case of North Carolina boy held in South Bend

HAMMOND, Ind. — The U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Indiana issued a press release Thursday in response to media reports about the arrest of 16-year-old Ashton Lundeby of North Carolina, who is being held at the Juvenile Justice Center in South Bend.

According to the release by U.S. attorney David Capp, his office "previously announced that a juvenile was arrested pursuant to a federal warrant. The arrest stems from a false bomb threat directed to Purdue University on Feb. 15 and similar threats directed to other schools.

"The FBI, the Purdue University Police Department and the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office conducted an extensive investigation into this matter, resulting in that arrest. Over recent days, several media sources have reported information that is incorrect.

"Accordingly, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana wishes to further announce that a juvenile information has been filed and is pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. That charge alleges a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(e), which prohibits sending false information about an attempt to kill, injure or intimidate any individual or to unlawfully to damage any building through an instrument of interstate commerce. This charge is unrelated to the Patriot Act.

“The juvenile has appeared in court on three occasions, once in North Carolina for an initial hearing and a detention hearing, and twice in Indiana for a continued initial hearing and a status hearing. At each hearing, the juvenile was represented by counsel. The government has filed a motion with the Court seeking to transfer the juvenile to adult status for prosecution pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 5032; that motion is pending before the Court and is scheduled for a hearing during the month of May.

“The juvenile is presently housed in a juvenile facility in the Northern District of Indiana where he does not have contact with adult offenders. His mother has been apprised of each court appearance and has attended the hearing in North Carolina; she did not appear at either of the hearings in Indiana. The juvenile facility where he is housed permits family visits.

“Because the statutes governing juvenile proceedings limit public disclosure of information related to a juvenile case, the United States Attorney declines any further comment.”

The media attention on the case so far has centered around Lundeby's mother protesting the arrest of her 16-year-old son from his home in Oxford, N.C. WRAL-TV reported last week that the 10th-grade home-schooler is being held on a criminal complaint that he made a bomb threat from his home on the night of Feb. 15. The article has since been circulating on the Internet as a civil-rights infringement under Patriot Act constraints.

The family was at a church function that night, his mother, Annette Lundeby, told the TV station.

Reporter John Paul will have more on this story on WSBT News at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.

May 6, 2009: WLFI TV

Battered 3-year-old died in hospital
Doctor: injuries "could not have been accidental"

Updated: Wednesday, 06 May 2009, 7:45 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 06 May 2009, 11:30 AM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A 3-year-old girl has died after a five-day stay in Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

The child, Kimberly Snow, was admitted to the hospital after an incident last Thursday, when police received a call to help an unresponsive 3-year-old child.

Kimberly was first taken to Home Hospital but was transferred to Riley shortly thereafter, where she remained in critical condition for several days. She died at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

She had been left in the care of her mother's boyfriend 31-year-old, Thomas Dexter.

Dexter was arrested last week on suspicion of Neglect of a Dependent Causing Serious Bodily Injury and Aggravated Battery. On Wednesday the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor charged Dexter with Neglect of a Dependent, a Class A felony.

The court affidavit said the child was examined by doctors at Riley Hospital, who found serious head trauma. These documents also show that police spoke with Dr. Hibbard, who is known to be a leading expert in the State of Indiana in child abuse examinations. Dr. Hibbard examined Kimberly and confirmed the head trauma, as well as a compression spinal fracture, and retinal hemorrhages in both eyes.

The affadavit states that Dr. Hibbard said that Kimberly's injuries were caused by inflicted trauma and could not have been accidental.

The child's mother, Amber Haper, had left home around 9:15 a.m. to attend an appointment. The affadavit said that Haper told police Kimberly was getting dressed as she left for her appointment and was healthy and uninjured at the time.

Court records say Dexter first told police he left the girl in the bathtub and when he returned to check on her, she was unresponsive.

When two Lafayette Police detectives spoke with Dexter again, asking him to explain Kimberly's extensive injuries, court documents show that his story changed.

Though Dexter initially said he found her unresponsive in the bathtub, he then told detectives that Kimberly wet her pants, so he took her into the bathtub to change her clothes and clean her up, the affadavit said. According to the affadavit, Dexter said he was playfully tossing her when he accidentally dropped her into the bathtub, causing her to strike her back on the edge of the tub and hit her head on the bottom of the tub. The documents further say that Dexter said he picked her up and was carrying her when he accidentally struck her head on the door frame or short wall as he left the bathroom to go downstairs.

The Marion County Coroner's Office is conducting an autopsy and have told police that the child's death was hemhorrage due to blunt force trauma to the head, but the final autopsy report will not be available for several weeks. There was initial delay in filing charges while the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor awaited information from the autopsy.

Dexter posted bail and is no longer in the Tippecanoe County jail.

May 6, 2009: Indianapolis Star

Officials: 3-year-old's death no accident

By Sophia Voravong / Lafayette Journal-Courier
Posted: May 6, 2009

A Lafayette man suspected of causing head injuries that killed his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter would get angry when the girl peed her pants, an older sibling reportedly told investigators.

Thomas A. Dexter, 31, was charged Wednesday with neglect of a dependent causing death, a Class A felony, in connection with the death of Kimberly Snow.

Kimberly was admitted to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis a week ago today. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said she died at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Investigators are waiting on results of Kimberly's autopsy, which was completed Wednesday morning at Indiana University's School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Harrington said.

The preliminary cause of her death is hemorrhage due to blunt force trauma to the head.

The Lafayette Police Department was called about 10 a.m. last Thursday to 3032 Phipps Court in the Country View Estates apartment complex where Dexter lived with his girlfriend and her three children.

Dexter is not the father of the kids, Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said. Kimberly's siblings are ages 9 months and 6.

He was the only adult and Kimberly was the only child home at the time. Her mother, Amber Haper, and the baby were at a Women, Infants and Children appointment.

Dexter reportedly told investigators that he put Kimberly in the bathtub and, after being gone for a few minutes, found her face submerged in the water. But the first responding police officer noted that the girl's neck and right arm were dry to the touch.

Kimberly initially was taken to Home Hospital and transferred by ambulance to Riley that morning.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with the criminal charge, Dexter told police Kimberly's injuries occurred when he threw her in the air like a "circus act." He allegedly said the girl's head accidentally struck the bottom of the tub.

Dexter also reportedly said the girl's head struck either the door frame or a wall as he carried her out of the bathroom.

But doctors at Riley said Dexter's story did not match Kimberly's injuries, which "were caused by inflicted trauma and could not be accidental."

A CT scan showed that she suffered a subdural hematoma, or a type of traumatic brain injury that causes blood to pool around the brain. She also had retinal hemorrhages in both eyes and a compression spinal fracture.

Kimberly's 6-year-old sister was interviewed Friday by a child forensic investigator, during which time she allegedly said that Dexter would discipline them by spanking, smacking them in the mouth or making them stand in the corner but only when their mom was at work. She said "Kimmy" also got in trouble with Dexter and their mother when she peed her pants.

The girl's grandfather told investigators that he previously was concerned that Kimberly seems to get hurt while in Dexter's care, according to the affidavit signed by Detective Bragg McDole. But he said the girl never said anything about Dexter or appeared scared of him.

Harrington said the investigation is ongoing.

Detectives with the Lafayette Police Department declined Wednesday to comment on the case, instead referring questions to Harrington.

In a request for a warrant to search the Phipps Court residence, investigators sought clothing worn by both Kimberly and Dexter. They also wanted to examine the bathroom and fixtures.

Dexter is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on both a 15-day probation detention and a $100,000 surety bond. He originally was arrested Friday but was released from jail after quickly posting a $25,000 surety bond.

Zeman, who handles crimes involving children for the prosecutor's office, said Wednesday that she does not anticipate additional charges being filed against Dexter.

Results of Kimberly's autopsy will likely take several weeks.

May 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bond increased for dad accused of battery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Bond was significantly increased Monday for a Lafayette man accused of causing serious facial injuries suffered by his son, 7.

Taurean J. Debose, 24, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of battery causing bodily injury after the boy's grandparents took him to the Home Hospital emergency room.

Hospital staff contacted the Lafayette Police Department about 12:30 a.m. Capt. Bruce Biggs, commander of the investigations division, said the boy's left eye was nearly swollen shut.

He also had extensive bruising and swelling on his left cheek. Biggs said the boy was removed by the Department of Child Services and placed in foster care.

Debose's bond was raised from $500 cash to $50,000 surety. The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office has until Thursday afternoon to file formal charges.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6, the 7-year-old told investigators that he was smacked, punched in the face and whooped with a belt by Debose a couple of days before the emergency room visit.

Debose apparently admitted to being upset with the boy, but he said the facial injuries occurred when he went to nudge his son's shoulder and the boy ducked down. Debose also allegedly admitted to keeping his son out of school on Thursday and Friday because he was worried about how the injury looked.

The boy's grandparents took him to the emergency room after their daughter -- the boy's mom -- dropped him off at their home.

Debose remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail late Monday.

May 1, 2009: WLFI TV

Community can help stop gangs
WeTip Hotline is invaluable resource

Updated: Friday, 01 May 2009, 8:55 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 01 May 2009, 4:56 PM EDT

- Laura Kirtley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Police and school administrators say step one for any community is to stop gang influence among kids. Parents are part of the solution. It is a matter of educating them about gangs so they know what to look out for. Some students said most parents are not aware of just how influential gangs are in the schools.

"Some parents don't even know what's going on. Most kids don't even talk about it because they are too afraid to talk about it at home, because they don't want anything to happen to them," Lafayette Jeff High School student Austin Jackson said.

Lafayette Police Officer Mike McIver works in the Lafayette school system. He said he has seen a child as young as six-years-old sporting gang paraphernalia.

"There has also not been a whole of education in the home about gangs. What they create and what can happen when you get involved in the gang. So when they get into it, they don't really know what they are getting in to until it's too late," McIver said.

Some students who have found themselves caught up in gang activity have a warning for parents and students.

"I joined it because I had problems. Now I know it's not good. It's not fun. It gets you into a lot of trouble. From my experience I'd tell them no--don't join gangs it's not good," a Lafayette Jeff High School student said.

Outside of the schools and in our neighborhoods, police say graffiti is a sign residents should not ignore. While gang graffiti is creeping up around the community, people are just as quickly working to clean it up. Something Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said is important to show gangs they are not wanted in the community.

"When they know that local citizens are going to be protective of their neighborhoods they'll move on to another city or location where they can blend in and do their illegal activity," Harrington said.

Lafayette residents, who have seen their neighborhoods spoiled by gang activity and drug deals, urge others to be aware and work with law enforcement to save their neighborhoods.

"It's everybody's problem. Everyone in the city of Lafayette it can happen in your neighborhood too," Lafayette resident, Tracey Smith said.

Parents, teachers, and community members can do more to help. A website set up by the Tippecanoe County Prosecutors office shows which gangs are working in our area. It can be a good resource for parents. They can find out what to look out for--gang identifiers like signs and colors. For more information Click here

Additionally, the Prosecutor said the anonymous WeTip Hotline is an invaluable resource. The number is 1-800-78-CRIME. Harrington said since WeTip started in May 2008, they have received 700 tips.

April 30, 2009: WLFI TV

Gang influence seen throughout county
Spike in drug arrests tied to gangs

Updated: Thursday, 30 Apr 2009, 5:52 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 30 Apr 2009, 5:14 PM EDT

- Laura Kirtley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Drug arrests in Tippecanoe County have skyrocketed, something police directly link to gangs in the area. Local police estimate there may be more than a thousand gang members living in Tippecanoe County. One place police are working to cut down on gang activity is in local schools. For kids who crave inclusion, schools are the perfect breeding ground for gang recruitment.

"I think it's just to feel like part of a group, and just to feel welcomed somewhere. That's mostly it. Some people just walk around the hallways by themselves. Just hang out, like a little clique," a Lafayette Jefferson student said. "For someone who is lost, to some extent, not having the bonding of family and friends then that becomes a very powerful recruiting tool," said Lafayette Jeff High School Assistant Principal Roger Francis.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said it is easy to see gang influence in the community by just looking at the number of drug arrests.

"Gangs are probably the most successful capitalistic organization in the world. They know how to make money, they don't pay taxes on it and its cash," Harrington said.

In 2008, there were 172 crack-cocaine arrests in Tippecanoe County, compared to 30 arrests in 2004.

"It's no secret that in the last three or four years we've seen an increase in convenience store robberies at the same time we've seen an increase in drug distribution by gangs," Harrington said.

Lafayette Police created the Street Crimes Unit in 2007 to counteract increased gang activity. Officers patrol areas where there are high numbers of drug arrests and gang activity.

"Out here originally, this was a good spot for a lot of people to come there were a lot of gang members out here that, they knew to come here and that's what caused a lot of the problems," Lafayette Police Sergeant Tim Payne said.

Back in the schools, students said gang members are easy to spot.
"In the bathroom there is graffiti sometimes there is so much graffiti that they have to close down the bathrooms to clean up the walls," Lafayette Jeff High School senior said.

Tomorrow we will take a look at how police, school administrators and community members are fighting back against gangs.

April 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Armed robbery nets 10 years in prison

STAFF REPORTS
A Gary man was sentenced today to 10 years in prison for holding up a Lafayette convenience store a year ago. Stephen Baker, 23, was one of three people charged in connection to the April 21, 2007, armed robbery at the Marathon Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue and U.S. 52 North.

He pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to robbery, a Class B felony.
Baker, Dante J. Dillinger, 22, and Michael L. McCollough, 17, were arrested that day after the Petro truck stop at U.S. 24 and Interstate 65 in Remington was held up. Patrol units spotted a vehicle that matched one at the scene at the robbery.

During the traffic stop, officers spotted a sawed-off shotgun in the rear hatch of the vehicle. They later searched the vehicle and a found a .357 magnum revolver that investigators suspect was used in the robbery.

According to Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Baker said they committed the robbery to get money to buy drugs. All three suspects are from Gary.

McCollough pleaded guilty last week to robbery, a Class B felony. He's scheduled to be sentenced June 5 before Judge Randy Williams.

Dillinger is scheduled to stand trial June 2 before a Superior 1 jury.

April 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-CFRC worker enters molestation plea

STAFF REPORTS

A West Lafayette man faces between four and 16 years in prison for having sexual contact on several occasions with a 7-year-old boy.

Nathan D. Hawkins, 29, pleaded guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of child molesting, each a Class C felony.

He's scheduled to be sentenced June 8 by Judge Randy Williams.

Hawkins was arrested in December after the boy's mother, an acquaintance of Hawkins, found photos of suspected child pornography on Hawkins' cell phone and computer. She then asked her son if he had ever been touched inappropriately.

According to court documents, the 7-year-old told a child forensic investigator that the alleged sexual abuse began nearly three years earlier.

He gave different scenarios in which he allegedly was touched sexually by the suspect or was asked to touch himself.

Hawkins formerly worked with youth at the Community and Family Resource Center, supervising high school-age children who were referred there through the juvenile court system.

The victim was not a client at the CFRC.

Hawkins had been charged with five counts of child molesting, all counts a Class C felony. If the judge accepts his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, three counts will be dropped.

April 25, 2009: WLFI TV

VP robber gets 16-year term

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 16 years in prison for holding up a convenience store last summer and for being a habitual offender.

Lucio Hernandez Hinojosa, 27, was accused of pointing a handgun at two Village Pantry employees during an Aug. 6 robbery at the store on South Fourth Street.

No one was injured. The former Gary resident fled with $138 and a carton of cigarettes.

Hinojosa was found guilty of robbery, a Class B felony; theft, a Class D felony; and criminal confinement, a Class C felony, after a bench trial in February before Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. Williams later that month deemed Hinojosa a habitual offender.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said Hinojosa used the stolen money to buy drinks after the robbery at a West Lafayette bar.

Hinojosa pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 last November to charges of receiving stolen property, a Class D felony; and false informing, a Class B misdemeanor.

He also was convicted of residential entry in Tippecanoe County in 2001.

Hinojosa was identified as a suspect in the August robbery after a call was made to WeTip, an anonymous reporting hot line.

April 24, 2009: WLFI TV

VP Robbery nets 16 year sentence
Viewers help police find Lucio Hinojosa

Updated: Friday, 24 Apr 2009, 5:51 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 24 Apr 2009, 5:51 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A man who robbed a Village Pantry store last summer is going to prison for 16 years. Tippecanoe Superior I Judge Randy Williams found Lucio Hinojosa, 27, of Gary, guilty of Robbery while Armed with a Deadly Weapon, Criminal Confinement, theft and being a Habitual Offender during a bench trial in February. He sentenced Hinojosa to 16 years in prison, followed by 6 years on probation.

Hinojosa was identified after photographs from Village Pantry surveillance cameras were released to the media. **Several tips from the public were called in through the WeTip hotline.**

In a news release, Tippecanoe County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said during the robbery Hinojosa took about $138 in cash from the V.P. on South 4th Street. "After the robbery the defendant spent the money buying drinks at the Neon-Cactus."

McVey said Hinojosa has prior convictions for Theft, Auto Theft and Residential Entry.

April 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Drunk driver sentenced to 12 years

June 2008 car crash killed two

Updated: Friday, 17 Apr 2009, 6:22 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 17 Apr 2009, 6:22 PM EDT

- Kristin Crowley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - 20-year-old Chris Weaver plead guilty to driving while drunk. He crashed his car into a guard rail on Wabash Avenue in June 2008, killing two passengers Demetrius Fikes and Ben Shaw.

Weaver faced a maximum sentence of 16 years, and some family members of the victims said that's what he deserved.

"Nothing will bring my son back but it's time for Chris Weaver to take responsibility," said Linda Shaw.
Linda Shaw's son Ben was one of the victims in the crash. She fought back tears throughout the sentencing as deputy prosecutor Kristen McVey showed photographs of the crash.

"Losing my son Ben was one of the hardest things I've ever had to live through," said Shaw.
Weaver was traveling down Wabash road when he crashed into a rail, killing Shaw and Fikes. Nearly a year later friends and family of the victims continue to honor their memory by leaving flowers at the crash site.
"My youngest son has to go through that every single day. And I don't know what kind of damage that's doing to him," said Shaw.

Fikes' Aunt Ruby Vaughn says the judge's decision brings her closure.

"It's all tragic. To me, I'm just glad it's a closer. You know, it's all over with," said Vaughn.
But she said other family members do not share her feelings.

"They ain't happy. They ain't happy, but I am," said Vaughn. "I hate to see him go because you know, he's young. They still babies."

Of the 12 year sentence, Weaver will spend six years in prison, followed by two years in community corrections, then four years probation. Tippecanoe Superior Two Judge Tom Busch also ordered Weaver's license be suspended for five years upon his release from the Department of Corrections. Defense attorney Matt Sandy is appealing the sentence. Family members of Weaver would not comment.

April 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Driver accused of killing Harrison teen to plead guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man accused of driving impaired the night his sport utility vehicle crashed into another car, killing a Harrison High School student, is scheduled to enter a guilty plea June 26.

An attorney for Joseph L. Welch, 30, scheduled the date this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. He had been scheduled to go to trial May 5 before Judge Thomas Busch.

Welch has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest on Nov. 24 in connection to the death of 16-year-old Katherine Ann Baker.

He is charged with six felonies, including operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death, a Class C felony; OWI with a blood-alcohol concentration greater than 0.15 percent causing death, a Class B felony; and reckless homicide, a Class C felony.

Baker was turning left onto U.S. 52 from Morehouse Road shortly before midnight Nov. 23 when her 2000 Buick LeSabre was struck on its driver's side by Welch's 2008 Dodge Nitro.

The Harrison junior, who went by Kate, was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy showed she died from blunt force trauma.

A blood test taken at St. Elizabeth Medical Center showed that Welch had a blood-alcohol content of 0.21 percent after the crash. That's more than double Indiana's legal limit of 0.08 percent to drive.

Welch also was cited for two counts of disregarding a traffic control device. According to court documents filed with the charges, investigators have video from the nearby Marathon-Village Pantry reportedly showing Welch's vehicle going through two red traffic lights.

April 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman pleads to child neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman faces between two and eight years in prison for injuries that a friend's toddler-age son suffered while in her care.

Karla M. Culley, 26, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony because the boy suffered bodily injury.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 25.

Culley did not admit to injuring 20-month-old boy, whom she was baby-sitting for 11 days last August. But at the questioning of her attorney, Michael Trueblood, she acknowledged the seriousness of the injuries and said she never took the boy to get medical treatment.

According to court documents, the boy suffered an occipital skull fracture -- a break in the bone at the base of the skull -- and bruises on his face and ears, consistent with direct blows to the face.
Doctors at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis also found injuries to his genitals that appeared to have been caused by the area being pinched.

Culley told investigators that on other instances where she watched the boy, he always came to her with bruises. She explained that other injuries were caused when the boy fell down concrete steps and tripped over a toy, hitting his face on the linoleum.

Detective Bragg McDole of the Lafayette Police Department, who investigated the neglect accusations, said Tuesday that no other adults have been arrested or charged in connection to the boy's injuries.

Culley is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail, where she is serving a 120-day sentence for violating probation in an unrelated marijuana possession case out of Tippecanoe Superior Court 4.

Her attorney requested that Culley be admitted to Home with Hope after her release in mid-May. Trueblood also asked for the later sentencing date to see how Culley fares at the rehabilitation agency. "Substance abuse is an element here," he told Judge Thomas Busch.

If Busch accepts Culley's plea with the prosecutor's office, an additional neglect charge and two counts of battery on a child, all Class D felonies, would be dropped.

April 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man pleads guilty to rape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces between six and 40 years in prison for breaking into the home of a female acquaintance last summer and sexually assaulting her.

Steven R. Chavez II, 24, pleaded guilty this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to rape and burglary, both Class B felonies. Sentencing is scheduled for May 15.

Chavez has been held on a $100,000 surety bond in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest on July 25. That morning, a Lafayette woman reported that she was raped by someone who broke into her South Third Street residence.

She was treated for injuries at St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

According to court documents, Chavez and the victim have known each other for several years. The woman told investigators that she was in her bedroom when she heard someone trying to open the locked door.

When she yelled that she was going to call police, the suspect charged into the room and attacked her - squeezing the woman's neck so hard that she nearly passed out.

The man then shut the woman's 3-year-old son in the bedroom by tying shoelaces to the door knob and a nearby stair rail. He is then accused of forcing the woman into the bathroom, where the suspected rape took place.

Chavez was identified as a suspect because the woman recognized his voice and, when outside, noticed a green, four-door sport utility vehicle - a description that matches Chavez's vehicle - parked behind her home.

Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department said today that the attack is believed to have been an isolated incident.

Under the terms of his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, Chavez cannot appeal his convictions or file for post-conviction relief, Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said.

The terms of his sentence will be left up to Judge Randy Williams, who can either merge or stack the offenses to which Chavez pleaded. A Class B felony is punishable by between six and 20 years in prison.

Chavez also admitted Wednesday to violating his probation for unrelated intimidation and thefts cases.

April 11, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man who led police on chase convicted

STAFF REPORTS

An Illinois man faces prison time after being found guilty of fleeing from police and injuring two officers during pursuit a year ago that began at the Country View Estates apartment complex.

Ronald Lamar Wright, 23, was found guilty of resisting law enforcement with a vehicle, operating a vehicle while under the influence of marijuana, reckless driving and other misdemeanor offenses after a trial Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6.

Jurors deliberated for just 20 minutes before returning the verdicts, according to Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey.

The Lafayette Police Department was called to Country View Estates on the city's south end on Jan. 28, 2008, for

a domestic violence complaint. The caller identified Wright as the suspect.

Officers attempted to pull over Wright, who at first stopped his vehicle but then fled. The pursuit reach speeds of more than 60 mph going north on Ninth Street and onto Union Street.

Wright's vehicle crashed into a tree off Courtland Avenue. He was arrested shortly thereafter in the yard of a nearby residence, where he fought with police, McVey said. Two officers suffered minor injuries.

A sentencing date has not yet been set.

April 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Fight over TV leads to 6 years in prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Gary man will serve six years in prison and must take anger management courses for stabbing his former roommate during a dispute last summer over a flat-screen television.

Alvin R. McBride, 29, formerly of West Lafayette, also must spend a year on supervised probation after his release, Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch ordered this morning.
McBride pleaded guilty March 3 - the day his jury trial was scheduled to begin - to battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony, admitting that he stabbed Mani Johnson three times. He had been charged with attempted murder.

Johnson, 31, suffered wounds to his abdomen and left arm. Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe said Johnson bled so heavily that he required a blood transfusion after the "Blitzkrieg-style" attack.

"One stab wound went straight through his arm," O'Keefe said. "For it to go through his muscle and back out ... required a lot of force. Mani Johnson felt the defendant was trying to kill him."

McBride, however, testified that it was not his intent. The former friends had argued in prior months because Johnson was not working while living with McBride and owed him money.

"He used to be a close friend," McBride said. "I'm sorry. I wish he was here so I could apologize to him and his family."

The stabbing took place June 29 in the parking lot of The Lodge Apartments, 2101 Cumberland Ave. in West Lafayette, where both Johnson and McBride lived. An injured Johnson drove himself to the nearby Wal-Mart Supercenter for help.

According to evidence presented in court today, Johnson had filed a theft report June 23 with the West Lafayette Police Department, saying someone stole his 40-inch television and a game system from his apartment.

Johnson went to McBride's apartment on June 29 and, while peering through the patio doors, saw what he believed his television inside. He admitted to going through the unlocked patio doors and taking it.

Detective Sgt. Cindy Marion said investigators later determined the flat-screen belonged to Johnson.

McBride's attorney, Scott King, told Busch that Johnson's then roommate, Lamont Lane, gave McBride the television as payment for money Johnson owed.

The prosecutor's office, however, has not been able to contact Lane. It's believed that he faked his own death, O'Keefe said.

Busch also ordered that McBride pay about $4,300 in restitution to cover Johnson's medical costs.

"After listening to two hours of testimony this morning, there seems to be a disturbing trend toward self-help," the judge said, referring also to a prior sentencing in his courtroom for a drive-by shooting.

"I don't know why that is. Maybe it is just coincidental."

April 9, 2009: WLFI TV

Prison ordered in stabbing
Alvin McBride ordered to serve six years

Updated: Thursday, 09 Apr 2009, 4:45 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Apr 2009, 4:45 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A stabbing has resulted in a six year prison sentence for Alvin McBride.

The 29 year old Gary man pleaded guilty to battery with a deadly weapon.

McBride stabbed Mani Johnson outside Lodge apartments in West Lafayette in June 2008.
Court documents show McBride stabbed Johnson because he took a TV from McBride's apartment. Johnson claimed McBride stole the TV from him.

Johnson suffered stab wounds to the arm and abdomen and sought at a nearby Walmart.
Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington said Johnson supported of the plea agreement. McBride had originally been charged with Attempted Murder.

Once McBride serves his six year prison sentence, he must serve one year on probation.

April 8, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen's brazenness helps seal 30-year robbery sentence

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in prison for his role in an armed robbery a year ago that injured two Domino's Pizza employees.

McConney J. George, 18, was found guilty of 11 felonies -- multiple counts of robbery, criminal confinement and theft -- after a February jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

In handing down Tuesday's ruling, Judge Thomas Busch noted the teenager's lack of remorse. Three investigators with the Lafayette Police Department testified that they feared George would commit crimes of violence again.
"After I take statements, I like to ask the suspects what they learned from the interview, from the crime," Detective Lt. Tom Davidson said. "Very nonchalantly and without any remorse, (George) said, 'I left too many witnesses.'
"I was shocked by his answer."

George was one of two teenagers who stormed into Domino's on Creasy Lane the night of March 2, 2008. He was armed with a BB gun that appeared to be a handgun, according to testimony presented during trial.

A male employee was struck on the top of his head with the gun, causing a large cut that bled immediately. A female employee was punched in the face.

The second suspect, Shamone L. Evans, 18, pleaded guilty to two counts of armed robbery and was sentenced in

December to 25 years in prison.

George's mother, Janice Eloi of Baltimore, urged Busch to give her son a sentence in line with Evans. She testified that they moved to Lafayette just two to three months before the robbery, explaining that George was not familiar with the area.

"McConney thinks if he walks away, he is going to look weak," Eloi said. " ... He was not the ringleader. They made him out to be the ringleader. He didn't know Lafayette. He didn't know those places."

Both George and Evans also are believed to have been involved in a series of business robberies on March 8 in Lafayette. Those cases are pending.

Five other co-defendants -- all accused of minor roles, including accepting money taken in the robbery -- entered pleas with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office. They received lighter sentences.

George was represented during trial by attorney Mike Troemel, who also volunteered to represent the teenager on appeal.

During Tuesday's sentencing hearing, deputy prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich presented a recently discovered letter that George mailed from the Tippecanoe County Jail in April 2008. Sent to a female acquaintance, the letter described how to conceal marijuana in a pouch between two sheets of paper.

It also instructed the friend to put a co-defendant's name and address as the return address.
"This was an attempt to frame a co-defendant ... the 'snitch,' " Goodrich said.

April 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen gets 30 years for Domino's holdup

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced this afternoon to 30 years in prison for holding up a Domino's Pizza a year ago and injuring two employees.

McConney J. George, 18, was found guilty of 11 felonies, including multiple counts of robbery and criminal confinement, after a jury trial in February in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

He was one of two teenagers who donned dark masks - believed to be T-shirts wrapped around their heads - and walked into Domino's on Creasy Lane the night of March 2, 2008.

George was armed with a BB gun that appeared to be a handgun, according to testimony presented during the trial. A male employee was struck on the top of his head with the butt of the gun, causing a large cut that bled immediately.

Investigators who interviewed George prior to his arrest testified today that they were troubled by statements George made.

"Very nonchalantly and without any remorse, he said, 'I left too many witnesses,' " Lt. Tom Davidson of the Lafayette Police Department testified. "I was shocked by his answer."

The second teenager, Shamone L. Evans, 18, pleaded guilty to two counts of armed robbery and was sentenced in December to 25 years in prison.

April 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets 10 years for 3 knife hold-ups

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette woman was sentenced Friday to 10 years in prison for holding up two restaurants and a convenience store over three days a year ago.

Amy A. Jaime, 28, pleaded guilty in November in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to four counts of robbery, a Class B felony, and three counts of theft, a Class D felony.

It was done without the benefit of a plea agreement.

Jaime was arrested after Lafayette police received tips identifying her as a suspect in robberies at Domino's Pizza, 35 Beck Lane, on Feb. 25; Domino's Pizza, 1221 S. Creasy Lane, on Feb. 26; and Village Pantry, 3630 Greenbush St., on Feb. 27.

The robber in all three holdups was described as a short white woman in her late teens to late twenties. In each, a knife was displayed.

Detectives watching outside her apartment on Feb. 28 noted that a white coat worn by Jaime that day matched one worn by the Village Pantry robbery suspect.

Kristen McVey, Tippecanoe County's chief deputy prosecutor, said Jaime told investigators she robbed to support a crack cocaine addiction.

Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch also ordered Friday that Jaime serve two years on community corrections and two years on probation. She also must pay $786 in restitution.

April 3, 2009: WLFI TV

Former club president sentenced
Timothy Smith placed on work release

Updated: Friday, 03 Apr 2009, 6:55 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 03 Apr 2009, 4:12 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - Former booster club president Timothy R. Smith, 42, plead guilty to forgery, and has been sentenced to one year of work release for taking thousands of dollars from the organization.
Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Smith couldn't remember exactly what he did with nearly $22,000 that he took from the East Tipp Athletic Booster club during a six month period in 2007.
"He told the judge that he was going through a divorce at the time and was paying for family items," said Harrington.

At the time he was charged, Steve Kohne from the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department said that Smith used an ATM card, wrote checks, and cashed CDs.

Tippecanoe Superior I Judge Randy Williams also ordered Smith to serve five years probation and pay back the money he had taken from the the East Tipp Booster Club.

The booster club describes itself on its website as "a parent-run orgnanization that develops funds to support East Tipp Middle School student activities. Funds are used to purchase sports and extracurricular equipment, uniforms, and sponsor extracurricular club activites. East Tipp Booster Club members help run the concession stands at East

Tipp football, basketball, and volleyball events. In addition, a major fundraising activity is working at a concession stand at all of the Purdue University football home games."

April 1, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Coke dealer gets 16 years

-- Curt Slyder/cslyder@jconline.com

An illegal alien living in Lafayette will spend 16 years in prison for selling cocaine to an undercover officer. Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams sentenced Luis E. Trejo, 38, on Monday after Trejo had earlier pleaded guilty to a Class A felony count of conspiring to deal cocaine.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Trejo sold cocaine to an undercover officer in a southside Lafayette apartment complex in 2007.

Trejo was in a vehicle that was stopped by police after the sale. Police found 28.6 grams of cocaine inside, Harrington said.

"That's a very large amount," Harrington said, estimating the cocaine's street value at $3,000 to $4,500.
Upon his release from prison, Trejo, who is in the country illegally, will be subject to deportation, Harrington said.

March 31, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

VP robber gets 8 years

-- Curt Slyder/cslyder@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Monday for attempting to rob a Lafayette Village Pantry with a sawed-off shotgun in April 2008.

Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Robert P. Niles, 28, to eight years in prison to be followed by one year in community corrections and three years of supervised probation.

Niles pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony, and dealing in a sawed-off shotgun, a Class D felony.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Niles walked into the Village Pantry at 1008 S. Fourth St., on April 21, 2008, and pointed a sawed-off shotgun at the clerk, demanding money.

After the clerk didn't respond to at least two demands for money, Niles fled, Harrington said.
He was arrested at his Lafayette home a few days later. A sawed-off shotgun was found under his pillow, Harrington said.

March 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Concern about heroin on rise
Last year, 11 cases -- 9 so far this year

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

From what Detective Jon Eager of the West Lafayette Police Department knows now about heroin, it's no surprise how quickly abuse of the drug spread in his childhood hometown.

At one point, his Indiana high school's entire softball team tested positive for the highly addictive opiate, said Eager, drug recognition expert for the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

"Once you get a handful of people to try it, you've now got five new customers who need to have it," he said. "Heroin creates a physiological addiction. Your body has to have it. Once it starts in a community, you're going to continue to see it."

Officials say that makes the drug's recent presence in Greater Lafayette all the more troubling.
As of March 27, nine people have been arrested in Tippecanoe County on suspicion of heroin dealing or heroin possession. That's compared to 11 heroin-related drug offenses for all of 2008, according to Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

"This is a reason for concern because the drug has not been in the area for a decade or more," he said. "There are some officers who have never dealt with heroin before.

"It's one more terrible drug here that we have to try and stem the distribution of."

Sgt. Tim Payne, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, said heroin is typically sold in "stamp bags" that contain about a tenth of a gram -- making it difficult for law enforcement to detect.
Yet even in small doses, people can easily overdose because of its potency, he said.

Processed from morphine, a substance extracted from the seed pod of certain types of poppy plants, heroin can be sold as anything from a white powder to a black, sticky substance known on the streets as black tar heroin. Injected, snorted or smoked, it gives users a rush within seconds.

Eager, a member of the drug task force since 2007, said officers first began hearing about heroin in Tippecanoe County last summer. A few months later, they began to see the drug sold and abused here.
Most of it appears to be coming from Chicago and Indianapolis, he said.

"These people, when they take heroin, actually get physically sick," Eager said. "They have sweats and goose bumps. They throw up. That's why they continue to use it -- they have to have it to not be sick anymore."
Both Eager and Lafayette police Lt. Pat Flannelly, commander of the drug task force, say another concern is heroin that's been mixed with fentanyl, a synthetic painkiller.

Fentanyl can magnify the effects of heroin, creating the equivalent of a double dose of the drug. Eager said that variation has not yet been seen in Tippecanoe County.

In the meantime, law enforcement is working quickly to learn more about the opiate. Harrington and West Lafayette police Chief Jason Dombkowski met this past winter with the U.S. attorney's office in northern Indiana about heroin's increased presence.

Dombkowski said officers from Tippecanoe County recently attended a training session in Michigan City about the drug and its effects.
"We got a lot of good information on what to look for," he said. "It's certainly not something we want to see take a stronghold in our community."

March 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 16 years for dealing coke

STAFF REPORTS

Andrew Boyd, 23, of Lafayette was sentenced Thursday to serve 16 years for selling crack cocaine to Drug Task

Force officers in February and March 2007 at Country View Estates in southern Lafayette.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Boyd was sentenced by Judge Randy Williams in Superior Court 1 to serve 12 years on charges of conspiracy to deal, a Class B felony, and four years for forgery, a class C felony.

Boyd, who has prior convictions in another county for possession of a controlled substance, was ordered to serve 12 years in the department of corrections, one year community corrections and three years of probation.

March 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man found guilty of cocaine dealing

A Chicago man faces a number of years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday of dealing cocaine by a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury.

Brandon Mason, 23, was arrested in December 2007 after Lafayette police were called to investigate a domestic battery on Holloway Drive, south of downtown Lafayette.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said police found about 27 grams of cocaine and $1,000 cash on Mason as well as scales, syringes and cocaine residue inside the apartment.

He was found guilty of dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine, both Class A felonies, and two other drug offenses. The sentence for a Class A felony is from 20 to 50 years. He is scheduled to be sentenced April 23 by Judge Randy Williams.

March 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Growing presence, impact of gangs cited in Greater Lafayette

By Meranda Watling • mwatling@journalandcourier.com

Dru Anthrop said as a Central Catholic Jr.-Sr. High School student, he feels somewhat sheltered from gang activity and its influence in this community.

He said his awareness was raised after hearing Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington discuss the trends and related growing drug problems in Greater Lafayette. Harrington spoke to Central Catholic students and community members on Wednesday.

"I was kind of completely ignorant of gang activity because here, we're protected," Anthrop said. "I don't know anyone involved in gangs. This made me aware."

Harrington said teens like the Central Catholic senior and his schoolmates need to be educated about the signs of gang activity and how to react. That age group is more in tune with popular music videos and emerging technologies that gangs sometimes use.

"We are addressing the situation," Harrington said. "But you have to be aware. Because if you aren't aware and come across a gang and disrespect them, you could be in trouble."

Among the troubling local trends Harrington cited in his presentation was the known presence of at least 23 gangs in this county. Mostly, they have trickled down from the Chicago area.

He said while gang violence hasn't been a significant problem here, the drug trade is flourishing. More than 40 Class A felony drug arrests have been made this year, Harrington said. And more than half of those are believed to be gang-related.

Also, more heroin arrests were made in the first three months of 2009 than any year prior in Tippecanoe County.

Harrington said a drive-by shooting on Club Lane in December is believed to be gang-related, and he cited the

ongoing presence of graffiti around the county -- including a gang "tag" in a courthouse restroom.

He showed the students some of the symbols or tattoos different gangs use, such as specific numbers or colors identified with particular groups. And he encouraged them to notify police via the WeTip hot line at (800) 78-CRIME or (800) 782-7463.

Central Catholic senior Heather Christopher said after the presentation that "some of the statistics, especially the local ones, were shocking."

She also was glad to be aware of the problem and also what to look for or avoid.

"It's important to know where you are and who's around you at all times," she said. "And be able to recognize the signs and to do something."

March 25, 2008: WLFI TV

Jury convicts drug dealer
Cocaine was coming from Chicago

Updated: Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 6:01 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 5:51 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A jury convicts a Chicago man of selling cocaine in the Lafayette area.

Brandon Mason, 23, was found guilty of Dealing Cocaine, Possession of Cocaine, Maintaining a Common Nuisance, and Possession of Paraphernalia. Mason was the subject of a trial Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court I.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington said Lafayette Police responded to a report of a domestic battery in December 2007 on Holloway Drive. "Police spotted the defendant leaving the scene," said Harrington. "Police found 21 grams of crack, digital scales and $1,000 on him. Inside the apartment, they found more scales, cocaine residue, marijuana, and a pipe."

Harrington said Mason would drive to Chicago every week or two to bring back cocaine to sell in the Lafayette area.

Mason faces a possible 50 year prison term when he's sentenced April 23rd. Harrington says Mason has no prior convictions.

March 25, 2008: WLFI TV

Prosecutor educates parents on gangs
Parents learn gang symbols

Updated: Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 11:45 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 11:45 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Parents gathered in the cafeteria at Central Catholic High School see what they might miss when out in public.

"I was interested to hear about gang activity in Lafayette," said parent Lou Fenoglio.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington broke down the different gang symbols and tattoos.

"I didn't realize there were so many different gangs associated with the Lafayette area," said Fenoglio. Fenoglio will take what he's learned about the 23 gangs in Tippecanoe County home so he can educate his three children about what to watch out for.

"Just to be aware, not to be scared, not to be afraid, but to be aware and openly talk about it," Fenoglio said. Prosecutor Harrington said he's leaving the courtroom to take on the role of teacher so parents can be part of the solution to the gang problem.

"So we can be safe and be smart and so they know what law enforcement is doing about the issue," explained Harrington.

Harrington hopes the presentation will also encourage parents to get involved to get gangs out of the area. Parents should know they are liable up to 5,000 dollars if their child does any damage in association with a gang. Also, most gang crimes are prosecuted in adult, not juvenile court meaning convictions will show up on a permanent criminal record.

March 21, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man stabbed brother; gets four years

Sophia Voravong; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday afternoon to four years in prison for stabbing his brother in the back after a fight that began over money.

Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 also ordered that William L. Craig, 55, spend four years on supervised probation after his release.

He also must pay $18,016 in restitution for his brother's medical expenses.

Craig pleaded guilty in January to aggravated assault, a Class B felony, admitting that he stabbed Jeffrey L. Craig on Aug. 22 at the brother's residence on Cor Dale Court.

Jeffrey Craig, was stabbed more than once, with the most serious being a wound to the right side of his back that punctured a lung. He was hospitalized for a day at St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Jeffrey Craig told Tippecanoe County probation officers that it was not the first time his brother brandished a weapon at a family member.

According to court documents, William Craig told investigators that he had been staying with his brother for the past few months.

They had been drinking and playing games when they started fighting over William Craig's lack of employment and his not helping with finances.

March 19, 2009: WLFI TV

WL sex offender sentenced
38 year sentence for child molestation

Updated: Thursday, 19 Mar 2009, 10:31 AM EDT
Published: Wednesday, 18 Mar 2009, 10:04 PM EDT

- Jenna Emenhiser
- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man is sentenced to 38 years in prison for molesting two young boys.

Matthew Paul Richardson, 33, pleaded guilty to two counts of child molesting.

Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said the children were abused during a three year period starting in 2005.

The boys were ages six and ten.

McVey said when Richardson was interviewed by police, he admitted the molestation, but justified it by saying it was "consensual" and that "no one got hurt" because there was "no blood or bruising."

McVey said the judge found aggravating factors in the case, including the defendant had attempted to hire someone to kill the deputy prosecutor and two witnesses.

March 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Confinement leads to 10-year term

A Lafayette man was sentenced Tuesday to 10 years in prison for forcing his girlfriend out of her vehicle and into his pickup, then driving her to a home they shared.

The incident took place in June 2008 near Happy Hollow and River roads.

Douglas H. Wilson, 34, pleaded guilty in November in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to criminal confinement, a Class C felony; domestic battery, a Class D felony; and possession of marijuana with a prior conviction, a Class D felony.

He also was found to be a habitual offender.

Wilson was accused of crashing into his girlfriend's vehicle before forcing her into his truck. The woman's three children and another adult were left behind.

March 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Realistic 'toy' guns growing concern for police officers

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

When two masked men stormed into a Lafayette restaurant a year ago waving a black handgun, employees had no way of telling that the brandished weapon was a toy.

The BB gun was made of a hard, heavy plastic. Silver-colored metal detailing contributed to its realistic appearance, Detective Herb Robinson of the Lafayette Police Department testified during a trial last month of one of the suspects.

It was just one example of a growing concern for law enforcement officials, who say toy guns that closely resemble real weapons could end in tragedy.

"At quick glance, in the heat of the moment, there's no way to tell what's real and what's not," Robinson said this week. "You have to assume in those situations, such as robbery, that a weapon being pointed at or directed toward you may very well cause harm."

Since 2000, the Lafayette Police Department has investigated at least 33 incidents involving "fake or fictitious" weapons, including airsoft guns that shoot plastic BBs at relatively low velocities.

Robinson said the actual number of incidents could be higher because of instances where a crime is initially entered as involving a firearm. He shared samples of airsoft guns confiscated over the years and kept in LPD's property room.

"These two here are very similar in size, color, markings, handles," Robinson said. "The biggest difference is their weight, but even then there's not a lot of difference."

Federal law requires that toy guns or imitations have an orange tip to indicate they're not real, but the tips can be removed or easily disguised. One of the airsoft guns confiscated by Lafayette police had the orange tip painted black.

And Tippecanoe County Sheriff Tracy Brown said the orange tip may not be noticeable in poor lighting.
"As police officers, we have to look at the totality of the situation. If it's an 8 year old carrying it, it's probably not a real weapon," he said. "But if it's a teenager, that is not as easy to determine. It's a matter of time and place."

Brown agreed with Robinson that some manufacturers make realistic airsoft and BB guns with similar sizes, shapes and magazines to actual firearms. But he also points out that some are made with transparent or colored plastic to set them apart.

A spokeswoman with the Toy Industry Association, based in New York City, did not immediately return a message left Tuesday seeking comment.

The line between real and fake is less blurred at the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said his office focuses on the intent of the criminal to determine what charges will be filed.

For instance, someone who uses an airsoft or BB gun to hold up a convenience store could be charged with armed robbery, a Class B felony. It carries a heftier sentence than robbery when a weapon is not involved.
"A lot of these BB guns, if you look at them in a split second, look real to a store clerk or a police officer," Harrington said. "It goes toward the intent of what they're trying to do -- what the victim perceives the crime as being. Even if it's a real gun that was not loaded, that is an inconsequential aspect.

"Laws are written to protect the public and the citizens."

March 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Domestic dispute leads to prison time
Doug Wilson pleads to confinement case

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Mar 2009, 3:56 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 17 Mar 2009, 3:56 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County man is going to prison for ten years for forcing his former girlfriend into his vehicle and confining her.

Doug H. Wilson, 34, pleaded guilty to Domestic Battery, Possession of Marijuana While Having a Prior Conviction, and for being a Habitual Offender.

Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said the charges stem from an incident on June 16, 2008. "Wilson forcibly removed the victim, his girlfriend, from a car, forced her into his truck, and drove her against her will to a house they shared," said McVey in a news release. “The event was witnessed by 3 young children that were in the truck during the offense. Marijuana was found in the defendant's truck."

The defendant has prior convictions from Florida and Georgia for Vehicle Theft, Burglary, Possession of Methamphetamine, and Fraud. The defendant resided in Tippecanoe County from October 2007 until the offense occurred in June of 2008.

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Elizabeth Goodrich argued the case for the State of Indiana.

March 6, 2009: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for record cocaine bust
One of area's largest drug seizures

Updated: Friday, 06 Mar 2009, 5:54 PM EST
Published : Friday, 06 Mar 2009, 4:19 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A sentencing came on March 6 in what prosecutors believe is one of the largest cocaine seizures in the Lafayette area.

Sergio Neri-Ortiz, 30, pleaded guilty to dealing cocaine. Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch sentenced Ortiz to 40 years in prison.

Ortiz was arrested in April as part of a drug task force investigation. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said officers seized cocaine at 914 N. 8th Street in Lafayette. Harrington said officers found 2.5 kilos (or nearly five pounds of cocaine) with a street value of $250,000. "The drugs were hidden all over the house," said Harrington. "They even found some cocaine inside a six year old child's backpack." Harrington said the child tested positive for cocaine.

Harrington said police believe Ortiz was a major player in drug trafficking in the Lafayette area.

February 25, 2009: Monticello Herald Journal

Claypool murder case gets boost of support
Anonymous tip line, bigger reward added to investigation efforts by state.

By KATIE DUFFEY, kduffey@thehj.com
Published: Wednesday, February 25, 2009 10:41 AM CST

Using the lure of an increased reward and the veil of anonymity, local law enforcement officers and the family of slain Twin Lakes teacher Judith Claypool are hopeful new details will surface in the Dec. 28 murder case.

“We appreciate the support of the community. At this time we have placed our trust in local law enforcement officers, and have faith that it will be resolved,” stated Claypool’s brother Ken Houston, speaking on behalf of the family for the first time since the killing.

“We would hope that anyone with information would come forward.”

A partnership formed with the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor’s Office, investigators hope, will allow for information to be more forthcoming regarding the 67-year-old’s murder — the result of an apparent invasion of her lakeside home.

“Everyone is concerned that it hasn’t been resolved, myself included. One’s expectation often is that these cases

are solved soon after they are committed, and that is far-fetched. I do echo their concern however," said White County Prosecutor Robert Guy. "It is not from a lack of effort, but a lack of information."

According to Guy, Cpl. Scott Brown with the Indiana State Police informed him of a service used by the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office that allows individuals with information regarding a specific crime to make reports with explicit anonymity.

"He (Brown) indicated to me that we may be able to utilize this resource in our investigation on a one-time basis to piggyback with Tippecanoe County," said Guy.

"The unique thing about WeTip is that it has an anonymous hotline that they believe has a greater capacity of generating information because it does allow a person to remain anonymous."

Launched in May of last year as part of Tippecanoe County's Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative, WeTip is a results-driven non-profit agency that officials say above all places the importance on assisting law enforcement solve cases.

"After meeting with citizens, civic groups, businesses and neighborhood associations it became clear that there was a hesitancy to report illegal activity to police," said Kathryn Redd, Project Safe Neighborhoods/Anti-Gang Initiative Coordinator for Tippecanoe County, who attested to WeTip's immediate success stories.

"We have received in excess of 500 criminal activity reports, from 36 different counties in Indiana, since the program began."

According to the WeTip Web site, all calls are anonymous — not just confidential. Where confidential calls can be subpoenaed for legal purposes, anonymous phone calls cannot be traced or taped.

When calling the hotline, 800-78-CRIME, an informant is instantly informed that "This is the WeTip Crime Hotline, do not give your name or identify yourself in anyway." If at any time the caller starts to identify themselves, the operator will disconnect the call.

Once anonymity has been established, the operator takes the caller through a series of about 65 questions — a lengthy list aimed at eliciting as much information from the informant as possible. Finally, the caller is asked if "there is an arrest and conviction, are you interested in a reward?" If the answer is yes, the caller receives a three-part fictitious code name in addition to their tip number.

Once contacted regarding the Claypool case, Redd said her office immediately jumped at the opportunity to help White County investigators with the use of WeTip.

"When I was approached by the ISP on behalf of the White County Prosecutor for WeTip assistance, there was never a doubt that the executives at WeTip would provide the service," said Redd. "Given the severity of the crime, this is a case where there are no jurisdictional boundaries."

Since signing on with WeTip, Redd said Tippecanoe County has broken all records in the service's 36-year history. Attesting to its usefulness locally, Redd also indicated that other Hoosier counties' utilization of WeTip have paid major dividends in tracking down criminals.

"In early January, the Indiana State Police (in Lake County) asked for assistance from WeTip to assist in solving two cold-case gang murder cases," said Redd. "WeTip was happy to accommodate them in trying to bring the perpetrators to justice."

As White County's case is added to the WeTip database, flyers advertising the hotline, along with an increase in reward money, are being circulated throughout the community — with plans also on the way for a billboard to be placed in Monticello alerting residents to WeTip.

Last month, Monticello businessman Don Rollheiser offered $5,000 to the prosecutor's office as a reward for any information leading to the capture and conviction of Claypool's murderer. Spurred by this action, two local groups have recently come forward with additional pledges of money to help in the investigation.

According to Guy, the Class of '59 and Friends, as well as Twin Lakes School Corporation members, have helped the reward available swell to $10,000 — a total inflated further still with the promise of up to $1,000 from WeTip.

"There is someone who knows what happened, the key is making sure that person understands the program and knows there is a 100 percent anonymous method to report what they know," asserted Redd. "It takes the determination of the community to get the word out."

Anyone with information regarding Claypool's murder is encouraged to contact either Detective Patrick Shafer with the White County Sheriff's Office at 574-583-5121, or make their report anonymously with WeTip by dialing 1-800-78-CRIME.

Visit www.wetip.com for more information.

February 26, 2009: WLFI TV

Suspect extradited for 2002 murder case
Teresa Pacheco returned from Mexico

Updated: Thursday, 26 Feb 2009, 11:04 AM EST
Published : Wednesday, 25 Feb 2009, 4:23 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A 2002 Tippecanoe County murder case may soon see resolution. A suspect in the case was successfully extradited from Mexico on Wednesday.

Teresa Pacheco is charged with the shooting his former girlfriend Juanita Santarrosa. Police say Pacheco fled the Lafayette area after Santa Rosa was found dead along Lilly Road in September 2002.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Pacheco was put on a plane in Mexico, and arrived at the Houston airport this afternoon.

"Representatives of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department and a local FBI agent are escorting Pacheco," said Harrington. "Pacheco will arrive in Tippecanoe County overnight."

Court documents show the murder charge is based on DNA evidence from a green Pontiac Pacheco was using. It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat.

Pacheco was located in Mexico about a year ago, and is expected to make a court appearance this week.

February 17, 2009: WLFI TV

New anti-gang website online
Comprehensive site for parents and teachers

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Feb 2009, 5:52 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 17 Feb 2009, 5:36 PM EST

Niccole Caan

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A new anti-gang website for parents and educators is now online. The Teachers Against Gangs site began this week. Website members can ask questions in forums, look at gang symbols and post gang

related photos and video.

Kathryn Redd, the Anti-Gang Initiative Coordinator for the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office, describes the site as a comprehensive place to find out about gangs. "It's just pulling that information together so that the community has one place they can go and gather these things. We'll also have news reports, any current studies that are out," said explained. Redd will be an administrator for the site.

Also, developed recently was a companion anti-gang website for law enforcement: Gang Cops Online. It's a place for officers to share information confidentially.

February 11, 2009: WLFI TV

Rapist likely to spend life in prison
Jeffrey Akard sentenced to 93 years

Updated: Wednesday, 11 Feb 2009, 7:16 PM EST
Published : Wednesday, 11 Feb 2009, 6:41 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A Lafayette rape victim told a judge she wanted her attacker to be put away, so that he cannot hurt anyone else.

Jeffrey Akard, 34, was sentenced to 93 years in prison by Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch.

A jury found the former Purdue student guilty of repeatedly raping the woman and confining her in his apartment for 15 hours in September 2006.
Akard is already serving nearly 20 years in prison on federal child pornography charges. Police found the materials while investigating the rape.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says the victim testified she didn't think she would make it out of Akard's apartment alive. Police said the woman had gone voluntarily to Akard's home, but when she wanted to leave, Akard put her in restraints. Investigators said Akard shocked her several times with a stun gun, threatened her with a handgun, and sexually assaulted her several times.

January 23, 2009: WLFI TV

WeTip Hotline honored
Hotlines less than a year old

Updated: Friday, 23 Jan 2009, 10:17 AM EST
Published : Thursday, 22 Jan 2009, 11:49 PM EST

- Niccole Caan

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County's WeTip Hotline will receive a national award after being in operation less than a year.

The hotline will be honored at the national WeTip Conference for having the most calls per capita. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington says the community is what makes the program so successful in our area.

"The reward is for everyone in the community. I think it's tremendous everyone has excepted this and they will call the anonymous tip line and report crimes when they see them or they have any information about a crime that has

occurred. It's very rewarding," said Harrington.

Tippecanoe's WeTip is eight months old and already 475 tips have been taken. Harrington attributes part of the program's success to News Channel 18 distributing the number during newscasts.

"We noted that after Channel 18 uses the number we will see large tips the following 2-3 days," he explained.

Harrington will teach other counties in the nation how to make their hotlines successful at the WeTip national conference in California in April.

He believes the key is marketing the program to many different groups including schools, churches, neighborhood associations and businesses

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January 21, 2009: WLFI TV

Lafayette man charged with murder
Jeremy Knoy accused in beating death

Updated: Monday, 29 Dec 2008, 2:36 PM EST
Published : Monday, 29 Dec 2008, 2:23 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor has charged a Lafayette man with one count of murder.

Jeremy Douglas Knoy, 25, is accused of killing Derek Liphard of Indianapolis on December 26. Knoy is being held in the Tippecanoe County jail without bond.

Officers were called to Knoy's house at 2312 North 19th Street around 9:00p.m. Police say a man was found dead inside the house with massive head injuries. The Affidavit of Probable Cause said Knoy talked to detectives at LPD. According to the document, "While Knoy smelled of alcohol he did not appear to be impaired. He spoke clearly and forthrightly with police. Knoy and Liphard had smoked some marijuana together, drank alcohol and were hanging out. In the late afternoon, Knoy and Liphard had visited relatives in Americus, then returned to Knoy's house. Knoy recalled that he noticed the time on the microwave clock was 7:33p.m. Knoy said that he couldn't recall what happened next, but remembered standing over Liphard striking him with a baseball bat. Knoy was unable to explain why or how the events began that resulted in his beating Liphard with a bat."

According to the Affidavit, Knoy admitted that he and Liphard had been friends since childhood.

January 28, 2009: Pharos-Tribune - McClatchy-Tribune

Monticello woman accused of theft: Bookkeeper reportedly confessed to embezzling more than $20,000

A Monticello woman has reportedly confessed to stealing more than $20,000 from a public library and local soccer league.

On Tuesday morning, 38-year-old Kimberly K. Helms turned herself in at the White County Sheriff's Department after a year-long investigation into her activities as bookkeeper for the Monticello-Union Township Public Library and Twin Lakes Soccer Association. She was arrested on six class C felony counts of forgery and four class D felony counts of theft.

Based on an investigation by the Indiana State Police White Collar Crime Division and the Indiana State Board of Accounts, Helms is accused of writing 21 library checks to herself for nearly $15,000, making $3,640 in payments from library funds to cover personal credit card accounts and stealing more than $5,000 from the Twin Lakes Soccer Association.

Helms is also accused of using library credit cards on multiple occasions for personal use, then reportedly put the charges in the names of co-workers.

According to court records, Helms admitted to the misuse of funds and reportedly paid back $5,000 to the soccer league on March 10, 2008. The criminal activity dates back to 2006.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington has been called in as special prosecutor to handle the case because Helms is married to a White County sheriff's deputy. Harrington pointed out that Helms' alleged criminal activity began before her marriage to the deputy, who is not being charged.

Helms was booked into the White County Jail on a $10,000 cash bond. If convicted, she faces up to eight years in prison for each class C felony and up to three years in prison for each class D felony.

Kevin Lilly can be reached at (574) 732-5117 , or via e-mail at kevin.lilly@pharostribune.com

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December 12, 2008: WLFI TV

Heroin dealer sentenced
Essu Brunson receives 40 year term

Updated: Friday, 12 Dec 2008, 4:27 PM EST
Published : Friday, 12 Dec 2008, 4:26 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - An Illinois man is sentenced to 40 years in prison for selling drugs in the Lafayette area and hitting a police officer with his car.

Essu Brunson, 32, pleaded guilty to dealing heroin and resisting law enforcement. Brunson was arrested in June for selling about $1,000 of heroin to an undercover police officer near the Market Square Shopping Center. According to Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey, "the Lafayette Police Department Street Crimes Unit made three controlled narcotics
purchases of heroin from Brunson."

She said after the sale, officers arrived on the scene. As Brunson tried to flee, he rammed his vehicle into a van where officer A-J DeMello and his K-9 were standing. Demello suffered a knee injury. The dog was not hurt.

December 8, 2008: WLFI TV

Gang crimes on the rise
Tippecanoe County housing targeted

Last Edited: Monday, 08 Dec 2008, 6:19 PM EST
Created On: Monday, 08 Dec 2008, 6:19 PM EST

Renetta DuBose

Lafayette - Kathryn Redd, who works with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor, said the best way to decrease gang activity is for the community to step up.

It's gang fights, like one recently posted on YouTube with students behind the Big Lots store in Lafayette, that has authorities beefing up enforcement. Redd said crimes like graffiti and drug trafficking are being done by some former Chicago Housing Authority residents now calling Lafayette home.

"Criminal CHA clients are exploiting the system by setting up drug sales and distribution operations in complexes throughout our county," said Redd.

"Anytime you have housing projects sometimes that opportunity presents itself. But we just all have to work diligently to combat that, to be warm and welcoming to the people that are coming for the right reasons," said Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski.

Lafayette resident and Hammond native Blanca Acevez said not everyone moving from areas to the north participates in illegal activities. She said targeting young people with a positive message is key.
"There's no reason to carry a gun. You have every resource available to you to be successful. There's no reason for it. I think that needs to be advocated through the schools," said Acevez.

The prosecutor's office trained landlords in Tippecanoe County and local schools on how to operate with the We Tip crime reporting service. Redd said between May and September this year Tippecanoe County's "We Tip Hotline" has taken 137 tips and 411 "Reports of Criminal Activities." She hopes the results encourage people to speak up.
"By conveying our priorities and our message and the results of this enhanced enforcement, we have the opportunity to demonstrate to the community, that they have the power to do something, that they have the power to act," said Redd.

Redd said graffiti is down but there is a turf war between the Latin Kings and the Latin Dragons at McCutcheon High School. She said Lafayette Jefferson High School is the number one school for gang recruitment.

December 2, 2008: WLFI TV

Welch charged in death of student
Prosecutor charges Welch on eight counts

Updated: Tuesday, 02 Dec 2008, 6:55 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 02 Dec 2008, 4:21 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington has charged a Texas man with eight counts stemming from a crash that killed a Harrison High School student.

Joseph Welch, 30, of Galena, Texas, faces six felony charges including reckless homicide and operating while intoxicated causing death.

Court documents said surveillance video from the Marathon-Village Pantry at U.S. 52 and Morehouse Road on November 23 shows Welch ran a red light at Win Hentschel Boulevard. Then, Welch had a red light at Morehouse Road, where he collided with a car driven by Katherine Baker, 16, of West Lafayette. Baker died from blunt force trauma.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said cooperation from Village Pantry Corporate offices was instrumental to the investigation. "We appreciate their assistance with this case," said Harrington. "I also want to thank members of our FACT, fatal alcohol crash team, for all of their diligence in pursing evidence in this case."
Court records said Welch had been drinking at Cox's Pub prior to the crash. According to the Affidavit of Probable Cause, "During an interview Welch admitted drinking alcohol at the bar prior to the crash, but said he did not think he was intoxicated. Welch still claimed that he had a green light, and claimed there were other vehicles there at the time of the crash."

Welch is expected to appear before a judge for an initial hearing on Wednesday.
The court documents said Welch was convicted of Operating While Intoxicated in Dickinson County, Iowa in June 2007.

November 7, 2008: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for pointing firearm at officer
Robert Lee Scott gets 29 year sentence

Updated: Friday, 07 Nov 2008, 6:34 PM EST
Published : Friday, 07 Nov 2008, 6:34 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - A man convicted of murder in Florida is going back to prison for crimes committed in Lafayette.

Robert Lee Scott, 41, was sentenced to 29 years in prison. Last month a jury found Scott guilty of several charges. They include Battery with a Deadly Weapon, Resisting Law Enforcement and Pointing a Firearm. Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel found Scott guilty of being a Serious Violent Felon in Possession of a Firearm. "Martin will serve the entire 29 years in the Indiana Department of Corrections and faces a hold for Florida authorities on parole violations and other charges when he completes his prison sentence in Indiana," according to a news release from the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office.

The charges stem from Scott threatening a bartender and pointing a gun at a Lafayette Police Officer January.

Scott was convicted of murder in Florida in 1984 and was out on parole in January when he was arrested in this case.

October 31, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Cocaine dealer sentenced to prison
Jamaal Moore sold cocaine in Lafayette area

Updated: Friday, 31 Oct 2008, 5:35 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 31 Oct 2008, 5:34 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - A former Chicago man is going to prison for 38 years for selling cocaine at a Lafayette apartment complex.

A jury found Jamaal Moore, 27, guilty of several drug charges during a trial earlier this month. Moore's arrest was the result of a drug task force investigation. Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says Moore sold crack cocaine at Country View estates at least four times in September 2007.

Harrington said Moore has previous convictions of delivering and possession of cocaine in Cook County.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Jury convicts man of dealing cocaine

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:27 AM EDT

Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:27 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -- A jury deliberated about 2 hours before finding a man guilty of selling cocaine at a Lafayette apartment complex. Antonio Sessions, 27, was found guilty of dealing and possession of cocaine.

Sessions was arrested in October 2007 as a result of an investigation by the Lafayette street crimes unit and drug task force at Country View Estates. "He sold crack cocaine to an undercover officer at Country View Estates," said Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch also found Sessions to be a Habitual Offender and Habitual Substance Offender. Harrington said Sessions has prior convictions for delivery of a controlled substance in 1998 and 2003 in Cook County, Illinois. He was convicted of possession of cocaine in 2004 in Tippecanoe County.

Session faces up 80 years in prison when he's sentenced on October 24th.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Former foster parent sentenced for child molesting

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:18 AM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:18 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI)--A former foster parent is sentenced to four years in prison for child molesting. Paul Ray Smith, 45, of Lafayette pleaded guilty to two felony counts of child molesting.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Smith molested a young girl that was placed in his care. "Police officers investigated to see that there were any other victims," said Harrington. "There is no evidence Smith was involved with any other children in his home."

At the time of Smith was charged in April, Villages CEO Sharon Pierce said the Smiths had been licensed as foster parents for more than 2 years. During that time 21 foster children lived with the family.
After he's released from prison, Smith will serve two years on house arrest with GPS monitoring, then two years on probation.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Convicted drug dealer sentenced

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:20 AM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:20 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -- A convicted drug dealer was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in prison. In June, a Tippecanoe Superior Two jury found Jeffery Anderson Junior, 26, of Chicago guilty of dealing and possession of cocaine. Anderson was arrested as part of a drug task force investigation last March. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said undercover officers purchased drugs from Anderson on two occasions. "He said officers with a search warrant found more than 56 grams of cocaine and a thousand dollars in cash at his apartment," said Harrington.

October 7, 2008: WLFI TV

Area schools to implement crime hotline

Updated: Oct 7, 2008 06:20 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Schools in Tippecanoe County may soon have access to the national crime hotline already used throughout the community. You may have heard of calling We-Tip to report crime in the community. Now, the goal is to expand the reporting of crime seen or threatened at area schools.

Klondike Middle School principal Chris Cannon said she feels WeTip is needed.

"The influx of gangs and gang activities, I think more and more, we see that in Tippecanoe County. I think it's important to be proactive. To have something the students will be able to access," said Cannon.

WeTip Chief Executive Officer Susan Aguilar said WeTip has seen all types of problems in its 36 year history.

"Just about every single crime that has gone out into the community has happened in the schools. Fraud, drugs, vandalism, graffiti, threats, bullying," said Aguilar.

And the caller reporting any crime remains completely anonymous.

"If the informant tried to identify themselves in anyway we tell them we have to disconnect this call. You're going to have to call back and get a different operator because we cannot know who you are. Then we have no tapping, tracing or caller ID," said Aguilar.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office funds the $10,000 a year program. Project Safe Neighborhood and Gang Initiative Grant Coordinator Kathryn Redd said the WeTip call center received 560 criminal reports since it started in Tippecanoe County last May.

"At least 70 percent of them involve children in some way, shape or form," said Redd.

Tippecanoe School Corporation's Director of Administrative Services Christy Fraley said TSC may also be on board.

"We see a lot of different tips. Our students and our parents report anything that they see that they're uncomfortable with at school and really aren't comfortable with telling an administrator or a teacher at the school," said Fraley.

To report a crime on the WeTip hotline call (800)-78-CRIME. Crimes can also be reported at www.wetip.com.

A reward up to $1,000 is offered for helpful information.

Report by Renetta DuBose, WLFI.

July 7, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Internet predator convicted

One of 24 people arrested statewide in 2006 during an internet predator sting operation has been convicted in Federal Court of soliciting sex with a police officer posing as a 13 year old girl.

The statewide operation included several local law enforcement agencies, including the Lafayette Police Department, Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department and the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office.

Jeffrey P. Taylor, 39, of Logansport was recently convicted in a Hammond Federal Courtroom following a one and a half day jury trial, according to a press release from the United States Attorney's Office in Hammond.

June 30, 2008: WLFI TV

New tipline yields nearly 80 crime reports

Updated: June 30, 2008 02:18 PM EDT

Reported by Alyssa Rossomme, WLFI

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A new hotline has collected nearly 80 crime tips from people in Tippecanoe County in just one month. The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office started the WeTip anonymous crime tip-line on June first. Project Safe Neighborhood Coordinator Kathryn Redd said so far, citizens have made 78 reports of illegal activity through WeTip. She said some of the tips involve more than one crime. Redd said detailed information given by anonymous tippers is helping police investigate crime in specific neighborhoods. She said she is pleased with the number of callers looking out for the well-being of children.

"People are paying attention to [illegal activity], and people are paying attention to the children. So I found that very encouraging," said Redd.

Anyone can provide information about a crime or suspicious activity completely anonymously. Sheriff Tracy Brown said while police prefer witnesses use their name when reporting tips, anonymous information is better than no information at all.

"The one thing we're very keen on right now, obviously because the clock is ticking for the courthouse bombing. We've had some tips come in through the WeTip line, not only for that, but we continue to get tips for other criminal activity. And it's a pretty wide range. Everything from misdemeanor conduct, to serious felonies are being reported through WeTip so it's going to be a benefit for us," said Brown.

"I would just encourage people to call, if for some reason they're not comfortable with calling law enforcement, or calling another support agency that we have in Tippecanoe County to call WeTip," added Redd.

Anyone can report a crime or suspicious activity 24 hours a day by calling the WeTip hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME. WeTip offers a reward of up to $1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a criminal.

June 26, 2008: Lafayette Leader

Value of safety

Project Safe Neighborhoods launched in Tippecanoe County

By Rebecca Edwards
fcnrebecca@sbcglobal.net

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington first heard about a program called Project Safe Neighborhoods while at a conference in the spring of 2007.

He soon applied for a grant to implement the program in Tippecanoe County. The $53,000 grant was awarded and the funds were received last fall.

Shortly thereafter, program coordinator Kathryn Redd was hired to orchestrate the complex program, which is purposed to give rental property owners and managers the tools and motivation to make their properties less conducive to criminal activity.

Aproximately ninety percent of crime in Tippecanoe County occurs at rental properties, Harrington said. "That's why the program is so important to our community."

Harrington said that he was made aware of the severity of Tippecanoe County's drug and gang crime situation during his first days as prosecutor.

"When I took office, the community basically told me the largest problem for our community was gang and drug activity. This grant addresses those activities."

The Project Safe Neighborhood program involves training sessions for rental property managers and owners, which equip them to identify changes they can make to the dwellings they manage which will make them safer, up-to-code and also help eliminate the tendency for criminals to gravitate to their properties.

The program also incorporates the implementation of the WeTip crime hotline (1-800-78-CRIME), a one hundred percent anonymous tip-line, operated by a non-profit organization.

WeTip offers rewards to tippers whose information leads to the arrest and conviction of a criminal in Tippecanoe County. Callers are asked if they would like to receive a reward if their tip results in a conviction. They are then given a three name code which will be their means of collecting their reward.

According to Kathryn Redd, the hotline will help ensure that illegal activity is reported, an essential component of the Project Safe Neighborhood program. She said her passion for the program comes from her concern for the people and children whose quality of life suffers as a result of living in an unsafe environment where drug and gang activity is taking place.

"The purpose is to teach property owners and managers how to take steps and put guidelines in place to keep their property and residents safe and maintain property value. For me personally, its all about the people," said Redd. "Ensuring children have safe conditions to live and play."

Redd has partnered with all five law enforcement jurisdictions within Tippecanoe County to ensure the success of PSN and WeTip.

She has also gained the support of almost all of the area schools, which got WeTip flyers in the hands of students just before school let out for summer break.

The first training session for rental property owners takes place next Monday and Tuesday, but registration is closed because the sessions are full.

However, property managers can still sign up for sessions being held throughout the summer. The next sessions are already half full and will take place July 21 and 22.

After that, interested individuals can sign up for the third set of classes, August 4 and 5.

Property owners can sign up by email: kredd@tippecanoe.in.gov

Property owners can sign up by phone at: 765-413-7238.

June 20, 2008: United States Attorney's Office L.E.C.C. Informant 4: Volume 6, Issue 2; United States Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office Northern District of Indiana

Project Safe Neighborhoods in Tippecanoe County

Patrick K. Harrington, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor, and Kathryn J. Redd, Tippecanoe Project Safe Neighborhood/Gang Initiative Coordinator, are pleased to announce the first phase of the launch of the TIPPECANOE COUNTY WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hotline.

(On Right at Microphone) Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Patrick Harrington makes opening comments during a press conference announcing Project Safe Neighborhood/Gang Anti-Crime accomplishments on May 28, 2008 at Duncan Hall in Lafayette, Indiana.

In response to the citizens desire to become an active partner with law enforcement in ridding their neighborhoods of illegal activities and crime, all Tippecanoe County law enforcement agencies have partnered with We Tip on the war against crime.

By incorporating, We Tip Municipal, Law Enforcement, and School programs into a comprehensive initiative, all citizens are assured that they can use the system and that their crime tips will be forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

As the first phase of the We Tip program, over 65,000 flyers will be distributed, through the schools, to every child in Tippecanoe School Corporation, Lafayette School Corporation, and West Lafayette Community School Corporation. Based on the model used in the Compton Unified School District, in California, each child will be given three flyers and asked to distribute one to each neighbor adjacent to their home.

This grassroots initiative puts the power back in the hands of the citizens and away from those involved in illegal activity.

We Tip operates "800" toll-free lines, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by trained operators who are able to field calls in English and Spanish and with a TIDY machine for the hearing-impaired.

We Tip is one of the most effective tools that we can use to keep our community safe.
The We Tip Hotline will be live on June 1.

Further announcements will be made at the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Project Safe Neighborhood Anti-Crime Initiatives Press Conference on May 28, 2008 at 5:00pm, Duncan Hall. Susan Aguilar, WeTip CEO, will be speaking to the press at that time.

June 8, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Safety program to train landlords

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Deb Evans and her husband, Jim, own and manage two apartment buildings on Lafayette's south end, along with smaller properties in West Lafayette and Rossville.

Over the last couple of years, some tenants have been victims of vehicle break-ins and property thefts. A few others were worried that neighbors had been involved in illegal drug use.

"It wasn't this way two years ago, but things seem to be going steadily in this direction," said Deb Evans, a lifelong Tippecanoe County resident who was raised in Battle Ground.

"We do try to stay on top of things and screen our tenants as best as possible. We are very hands-on and do everything, management-wise, ourselves."

The Evanses are among dozens of rental property owners who will take part in landlord training through Project Safe Neighborhoods, an anti-crime initiative recently announced by the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The first six- to eight-hour class is expected to begin early this summer.

Kathy Redd, an investigator with the prosecutor's office and the program's coordinator, said a large part of the training will focus on steps rental property owners should take before accepting a tenant.

The class also will go over standards for safe and decent housing.

"It goes through the role of checking the applicant -- setting criteria that they want for their property, bearing in mind fair housing laws," Redd said. "They could choose to have all vehicles parked on their property be registered. ... They could require that applications only be accepted in person."

Redd, who had been meeting with rental property owners and neighborhood groups since December, said she came across several incidents of applications being sent to Chicago on a weekly basis.

To ensure that everyone is treated fairly, Redd said, standards set by property owners should be applied to all applicants.

"That's where it does become challenging," she said. "But you can't do it to one potential tenant and not another. That's absolutely imperative."

Deb Evans said she is excited for the program to start. She and her husband took part in one of the focus groups hosted by Redd.

"I am really impressed," Evans said. "My husband and I walked away feeling like we have somebody on our side. This has always been a great community. We need to keep it that way."

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a federal program that larger cities nationwide have used to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism. Tippecanoe County received its $52,398 grant last summer.

Data from the Lafayette Police Department shows a rise in narcotics-related investigations, from 410 in 2004 to 632 in 2007. Aggravated assaults -- batteries that resulted in seriously bodily injury -- also steadily rose during the same time frame, from 147 in 2004 to 194 in 2007.

Officials say they hope that Project Safe Neighborhoods will help drive those crime numbers down. The program also falls under "weeding" efforts for Weed & Seed, another federal initiative Lafayette is participating in to combat crime.

Ken Weller, executive director of Legal Aid Corp. of Tippecanoe County, applauds the efforts of the prosecutor's office. But he also has concerns.

"I'm not convinced that if they target rental property tenants, all our problems are going to magically disappear," he said. "They will just move elsewhere in the Lafayette area. Some attention needs to be paid to that.

" ... Some criminals, too, are homeowners."

Weller has been working on a standard lease that he would like to see used in Tippecanoe County. He has had clients who have had no written lease from their landlords.

"This whole program is very interesting," Weller said. "But Tippecanoe County has such a wide variety of tenants that they may have to take a more individual approach than originally envisioned."

May 29, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Leaders aim to crack down on crime before it gets out of hand

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

In the early '90s, when residents of Historic Ninth Street Hill learned someone was selling drugs out of a home there, neighbors sat nearby and recorded the license plate numbers of vehicles seen leaving the home.

"I was mad," Jane Boswell said. "How dare people do that in our nice neighborhood."

Now Ninth Street Hill -- and much of Tippecanoe County -- is dealing with illegal drug activity on a larger and more frequent scale. Getting a strong hold on a problem before it worsens is one of the key initiatives behind Project Safe Neighborhoods.

Representatives of law enforcement, local dignitaries, the prosecutor's office and other Tippecanoe County officials came together Wednesday at Duncan Hall to formally introduce the federal anti-crime and anti-gang program.

"It's critical that we attack the problem now," said Kathy Redd, an investigator with the prosecutor's office and the Project Safe Neighborhoods' coordinator. "If we don't handle it aggressively, it is quite possible for us to lose this city in three years, according to trends."

Redd, who was raised in Lafayette, has spent the last year researching crime trends and analyzing trouble spots in Tippecanoe County.

During a ride-along with the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, she witnessed firsthand suspected cocaine dealers on street corners.

After handing out fliers for WeTip, an anonymous hotline residents can call to report illegal activity, she was threatened by suspected gang members.

And in Redd's conversations and meetings with residents, she encountered dozens of people who said they knew of crimes taking place but feared reporting them.

"We are facing a problem with safety," Redd said. "We're seeing the degradation of neighborhoods. There is no one person to blame. What Project Safe Neighborhoods is trying to do is mobilize the community -- that's it is up to all of us to fight this."

Project Safe Neighborhoods also has been implemented in Allen, Lake and Saint Joseph counties, said David Capp, interim U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana.

Each community was allowed to use the grant -- $53,398 for Tippecanoe County -- to address its most prevalent problem.

"I knew there were some growing law enforcement issues in Tippecanoe County. They were seeing an influx of problems from the south side of Chicago and Lake County," Capp said. "We felt this was an area that we should start focusing on."

Boswell, a resident of Historic Ninth Street Hill for more than 30 years, was part of a focus group to inform neighborhoods about the program.

Part of Project Safe Neighborhoods includes training rental property owners how to recognize signs and, proactively, better screen applicants before they become tenants.

"We started seeing changes in our neighborhood in the last couple of years," Boswell said. "More and more crimes were being reported. We are a diverse neighborhood with a nice bell-shaped curve of ages and incomes.

"But to have gang-related vandalism and gang graffiti, it was very unnerving."

Residents there soon plan to create window clings to hang in their vehicles that will identify them as part of the neighborhood. That way, Boswell said, police will more easily recognize cars that are out of place.

It's this kind of community cooperation that officials -- among them Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski, West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis and Prosecutor Pat Harrington -- hope to encourage.

Russell Conard, who graduated this past weekend from Harrison High School, too urges the community to recognize a problem does exist. He pointed out the recent knife fight at Faith Community Center, in which five people were injured, as an example.

Conard lives near the center and exercises there.

"There's rising violence in our community," he said. "I have to admit that it's quite unsettling."

May 29, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

New project gives crime fighters a major ally

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Officials on Wednesday formally announced the start of Project Safe Neighborhoods in Tippecanoe County.

The federal program is an anti-crime and anti-gang initiative that larger cities have implemented to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism.

Project Safe Neighborhoods will take proactive and reactive approaches to fight crime.

Part of the funding will be used to train rental property owners in ways to keep out illegal activity, in part by training them to better screen potential tenants.

The second aspect is the launch of WeTip, an anonymous hotline that residents can use to report crime tips to any law enforcement agency.

THE BACKGROUND

Last summer, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office received a $53,398 grant for the initiative. Funding was used to hire an investigator and project coordinator and to purchase notebook computers so that police can track and analyze trouble spots.

David Capp, interim U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana, said he approached Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington about the program as a way to address growing problems believed to stem from criminals originally from Chicago and northwest Indiana.

THE IMPACT

Jane Boswell is a resident of Historic Ninth Street Hill in Lafayette, where about one-third of the neighborhood is rental properties.

Herself a rental property owner, Boswell was one of dozens who participated in focus groups for Project Safe Neighborhoods.

"Lafayette is not the same as it was 20 years ago," she said.

"I don't believe that any neighborhood in Lafayette is immune to problems were are seeing as a community."

May 29, 2008: WLFI TV

Community members learn about new crime tip-line

Updated: May 29, 2008 04:26 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office has launched a crime tip-line to get citizens involved in keeping neighborhoods safe. Community members learned more about the tip-line in free WeTip training sessions. Susan Aguilar, WeTip C.E.O. said the hotline is used in hundreds of cities as a way for citizens to report crime or suspicious activity. Tips are passed on to local police for investigation.

"We have helped law enforcement to arrest over 15,000 criminals, we've taken nearly a half million tips and we have helped law enforcement confiscate $340 million worth of illegal drugs and narcotics. So we've made a real impact on communities all over the nation," said Aguilar.

Aguilar said WeTip is effective, primarily because callers are completely anonymous. WeTip does not record or trace calls, and the phone system does not have caller I.D.

"We tell our informants, 'Do not give your name or identify yourself in any way.' If they try to identify themselves, we have to hang up that phone and tell them, 'Call back, talk to a different operator, we cannot know who you are,'" she explained.

Tracy Walder, a member of the St. Lawrence-McAllister Neighborhood Association, participated in a training session.

"The anonymous aspect is probably the greatest part of it. And just the fact that they have access to so many law enforcement agencies," she said.

WeTip offers a reward of up to $1000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a criminal. The WeTip number is 1-800-78-CRIME

May 28, 2008: WLFI TV

New crime fighting program announced

Updated: May 28, 2008 03:18 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI)--A new community initiative is aimed at fighting crime in Tippecanoe County.

The new initiative, "Project Safe Neighborhoods" is designed to keep illegal activities out of rental properties. Project Safe Neighborhoods Gang Initiative Coordinator Kathryn Redd said the project includes a free training program for rental property owners and managers. "We hope to educate them home to keep illegal activity out of their properties," said Redd. "Today it's something they really need to give consideration to because at a minimum 90% of all crimes are being committed out of individuals living in rental properties."

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Project Safe Neighborhoods has proved to reduce crime in communities across the country. "We felt law enforcement agencies and myself that it was important to start this program to try to reduce the crime in those high crime areas," said Harrington.

Another effort Harrington hopes will help is WeTip, a toll-free anonymous crime tip-line. "It goes right along with PSN, because it gives a vehicle for the community to become involved in fighting crime, one neighborhood at a time, and taking back our neighborhoods," said Harrington.

The "We Tip" Tippecanoe County tip-line is funded by the Prosecutor's Office to get the community involved in fighting illegal activity. Any citizen over the age of five can make an anonymous tip by calling 1-800-78-CRIME.

There are 9 WeTip training sessions tomorrow for community members. The 30 minute sessions are held in the Grand Prairie Conference Room at the Tippecanoe County Office Building. The County Office building is located at 20 N. Third Street in Lafayette. Session times are: 8:00a.m., 8:45a.m., 9:45a.m., 10:30a.m., 1:00p.m., 1:45p.m., 6:30p.m., 7:00p.m., 7:45p.m.

Susan Aguilar, Chief Executive Officer, WeTip, and Sue Mandell, Director of Marketing, WeTip, will be providing an introduction to the new WETip Anonymous Crime Tip line program. The sessions are limited to 20 people. If you would like to attend send an email to kredd@tippecanoe.in.gov. Please indicate what session you would like to attend.

May 28, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Make a difference in your neighborhood

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Beginning Sunday, Tippecanoe County residents can anonymously report tips of illegal activity to any law enforcement agency.

Police and Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County schools recently partnered to launch the Tippecanoe County WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hot line. The hot line is part of the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office's new Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.

WeTip, a national nonprofit organization, staffs the toll-free line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, executive director Sue Mandell said. All tips will be forwarded within hours to the appropriate agency.

"We need citizens to be the eyes and ears for law enforcement," she said. "They can't do it alone anymore. We need to watch out for each other -- that's the key."

The phone number will be (800) 782-8463 or (800) 78 CRIME.

Earlier this month students in all three of the county's school corporations were sent home with three fliers announcing WeTip. They were asked to keep one and give the other two fliers to both adjacent neighbors.

More than 55,000 fliers have been distributed.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said WeTip has 100 percent confidentiality. For example, he said, if anyone gives their name during the call, they will be asked to hang up, call again and speak to a different operator.

May 19, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Law enforcement, schools to partner for crime tip line

STAFF REPORTS

Tippecanoe County residents will have a new way to report crime tips to any law enforcement agency this summer.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office announced in a news release today that agencies and schools will partner to launch the Tippecanoe County WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hotline. The hotline is part of the office's new Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.

The WeTip hotline will forward all tips to the appropriate agency. WeTip, a national non-profit organization, staffs the toll-free line 24 hours per day.

The hotline will go live on June 1. The phone number will be (800) 782-8463 or (800) 78 CRIME.

The first phase of the launch will include sending fliers home with all students in the Lafayette, West Lafayette Community and Tippecanoe school corporations. Each child will receive three fliers and be asked to also deliver one to both adjacent neighbors.

A press conference on the initiative will be held at 5 p.m. May 28 at Duncan Hall

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April 20, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Grand Prix partiers have day in court

By CURT SLYDER; cslyder@journalandcourier.com

Indiana University student Ashley Norman, 20, came to Purdue University last weekend to party with friends during the annual Grand Prix.

Less than a week later, she and 140 other Grand Prix revelers were in the Tippecanoe County Courthouse facing alcohol-related charges.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office and several courts held joint hearings Thursday morning for everyone facing alcohol charges they received during the weekend.

In three large groups, the defendants first watched a videotaped initial hearing in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 advising them of their rights and the potential penalties they faced, then were ushered off to one of three places to finalize their charges and pay fines.

"I thought it was pretty convenient," Norman said. "It was quick and easy."

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, the courts handled the cases that way to speed up the process.

Most of the people with first-time charges ended up with fines as well as enrollment in an alcohol program, either through the university or the court system, Harrington said. If they did everything as ordered there would be no permanent record.

"It's kind of a wake-up call," Harrington said. "We're saying you are accountable for your actions but we're not going to try to ruin your career."

Purdue students generally were ordered to enroll in an alcohol awareness class offered by the university Counseling and Psychological Services, or CAPS.

CAPS staff members were at the courthouse Thursday morning to enroll students in the class. The cost of the class was built into the court service fees, said CAPS clinical social worker Marty Green.

Many will have their classes next fall.

According to Cindy Houseman, director of Tippecanoe County Court Services, anyone living in Tippecanoe County who is not a Purdue student was ordered to take classes administered by Court Services.

Anyone from outside the area was enrolled in whatever classes are available in their area, Houseman said.

Of the 141 people arrested, 31 had their charges dropped, Houseman said.

Purdue sophomore Jordan Kirkegaard, 20, liked the streamlined process.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drug sweep nets cocaine, $300,000

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Authorities seized more than 5 pounds of cocaine and $300,000 in cash Monday from a residence on Lafayette's north end in what they're describing as the largest residential drug raid in Tippecanoe County in recent memory.

Three people were arrested after investigators served a warrant about 4 a.m. at an apartment at 914 N. Eight St. The Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force, the Indiana State Police drug enforcement section, the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit and a Purdue University police K-9 team assisted.

The Department of Child Services also was called when at least one elementary school-aged child was found inside, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

News of the arrests surprised neighbors who said they never suspected illegal activity there.

"They were all so friendly and respectful," said Rebecca McCreedy, who lives next door. "The police patrol this area pretty frequently. If anything like this happened, I'd guess it would be another house."
Harrington said authorities have been investigating one of the home's tenants, Sergio Neri-Ortiz, 29, since he sold cocaine to a confidential informant in September.

Neri-Ortiz was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony, and two counts of possession of cocaine, a Class A felony. He is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on $250,000 bond.

Police also arrested Eleno Vasquez, 37, and Amanda Vasquez, 32, on suspicion of possession of cocaine. Both also reside at 914 N. Eighth St.

Harrington said the prosecutor's office is still reviewing charges against the Vasquezes and that one offense likely will be neglect of a dependent. They are being held in jail each on $50,000 bond.

He said the cocaine found inside -- roughly 2.5 kilos -- has an estimated street value of $250,000.
"This was a major drug recovery into a substantial drug ring in the Lafayette area," Harrington said. "With this substantial seizure, we hope to have slowed down the sale of drugs in the community."

McCreedy and her roommate, Laura Hickey, said they heard some yelling Monday morning and thought it might have been a domestic dispute. Then they noticed unmarked vehicles blocking both ends of their street.
The arrests happened so quietly that McCreedy went back to bed.

Hickey said she never noticed people coming and going from the home. "I'm used to seeing the kids playing outside. Everyone who lived there was so nice," Hickey said. "It was the same faces all the time. I don't remember their names, but we said hi. "It is really hard to process the information to tell you what I think. I am just really shocked."

Authorities made two additional arrests related to the same investigation.

Ismael Hernandez-Barradas, 32, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with dealing marijuana, a Class C felony; possession of marijuana, a Class D felony; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony. According to court documents, he is accused of selling marijuana out of his Summertime Trail residence to a confidential informant.

Tippecanoe County investigators on Monday also went to Crawfordsville and served a felony warrant on Ricardo Garcia, age unavailable. He's suspected of dealing cocaine in Montgomery County.

Harrington said Immigration and Customs Enforcement is checking into whether the five suspects are in the United States legally.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drug counts filed against 2

STAFF REPORTS

Two men were charged Monday with drug offenses after West Lafayette police and the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force served a warrant last week at their West Lafayette home.

Yujie Li, 21, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class C felony; dealing in marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

Ali Almelhem, 20, is charged with possession of a controlled substance, a Class D felony; dealing in marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of marijuana, a Class D felony; possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.
Authorities served a warrant April 8 at their home at 1102 Lindberg Road after a seven-month investigation.
Authorities seized marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, drug paraphernalia and $390 in cash from Li and Almelhem's residence.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 counts filed against WL driver who hit woman

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

A West Lafayette woman is suspected of purposely striking another woman with her vehicle last week, pushing the victim into the doorway of an apartment building, according to court documents filed Monday.

Mindy Lee Warthan, 27, has been charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with five felonies and a misdemeanor in the crash that seriously injured Erin M. Hutchins.

Hutchins, 28, of Lafayette is believed to have been dating Warthan's estranged boyfriend. Hutchins was treated at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis for a shattered pelvis, cuts to her lower back, and bloody scrapes to her leg and foot.

She has since been released, a spokeswoman for Clarian Health Partners, which runs Methodist, said Monday.

Lafayette police were called about 6 a.m. April 8 to the 3000 block of Keyes Court, in the Country View Estates apartment complex. Warthan is accused of driving a 1990 Buick Century that left the road and hit Hutchins, who had been outside with her roommate and the roommate's cousin.

Warthan was arrested about 10 minutes later pulling into a residence on Oregon Street. She had her 8-month-old daughter with her at the time.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Monday with the charges, a neighbor heard and saw the driver of a car scream at Hutchins and toss what appeared to be a bag of clothes. The neighbor then saw the driver back the car up and accelerate forward, striking Hutchins.

Hutchins, who lives at Country View, was pushed into the wall and then thrown into the door of an apartment next to hers. The door was knocked off its door jambs.

Warthan told investigators that she thought she had put her car in reverse and said she tried to stop after realizing the vehicle went forward.

But Officer Mark Roberts, a crash reconstructionist with the Lafayette Police Department, noted that tire marks on the sidewalk and in the grass leading to the building showed characteristics of acceleration.

Warthan was being held late Monday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

She is charged with aggravated battery, a Class B felony; battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; battery resulting in bodily injury, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness, a Class C felony; neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony; and leaving the scene of an accident resulting in seriously bodily injury, a Class A misdemeanor.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Police make another arrest in drug investigation

Updated: April 15, 2008 06:59 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, IND -- Police make another arrest as part of a drug task force investigation.

23-year old Juan Carlos Gonzalez is jailed on six counts, including dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says Gonzalez was arrested this afternoon outside his house in Lafayette.

Court records say Gonzalez purchased drugs from a confidential informant at least three times last summer.

Three other suspected drug dealers were arrested yesterday and officers seized five pounds of cocaine from a house in Lafayette.

April 11, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Manslaughter gets boyfriend 60 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Days after Brandi R. Thomas was killed in her apartment, the Lafayette woman's family found a letter she had handwritten to her boyfriend and father of her infant son.

It detailed a relationship that was quickly growing apart.

"I need you right now more than anything. ... I don't know if you love me anymore," Thomas, 34, wrote on Jan. 9, a day before firefighters found her badly burned body. "I'm sad, I'm hurt. Saying goodbye sucks. I'm going to say goodbye now."

Thomas' mother, Brenda Johnson, read the letter Thursday morning during the sentencing hearing of Thomas' estranged boyfriend, Jeremy R. Taylor.

Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Don Johnson sentenced Taylor, 30, to 60 years in prison in connection to the woman's stabbing death. He pleaded guilty in February to voluntary manslaughter, a Class A felony, and arson, a Class B felony.

"I'm very sorry I did this. There's not a day I don't regret it," said Taylor, who glanced up from his chair only briefly to look at Thomas' family.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Thomas' body was found Jan. 10 after Lafayette firefighters responded to a blaze at her upstairs garage apartment at 22051/2 N. 18th St. An autopsy determined she died of multiple sharp force trauma and massive blood loss from her injuries.

She left behind a teenage son, Jordan Thomas, and a now 5-month-old son, Logan, that she had with Taylor.

"Jeremy's bad people," Jordan Thomas said afterward. "Bad people get what they deserve."

Taylor's sentencing hearing was held Thursday at the magistrate's court in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a request made by law enforcement, the judge explained.

Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department said investigators had received information of threats made against Taylor.

"There's not enough to start a case," Shumaker said. "But we had heard rumors on the streets."

Brenda Johnson -- referring to Taylor's lengthy history of substance abuse -- said she suspects it was someone who knew Taylor through drug use.

"It was no one in my family or her father's family," she said. "He was a drug dealer when they first met. Brandi was trying to get away from all that."

Taylor admitted he had gotten into an argument with Brandi Thomas the night of Jan. 9 and he pushed her down. He was accused of stabbing her and then starting a fire afterward to cover the crime.

Taylor told the judge on Thursday that he suspected Thomas had been seeing someone. He said he had been intoxicated and used cocaine that night.

His plea agreement, reached between Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Taylor's court-appointed attorneys -- public defender Amy Hutchison and deputy public defender Lee Griffith -- came 22 days after Thomas was killed.

"Every time I see him, he tells me he can't believe he did this," Hutchison said. "Jeremy did care about Brandi."

In her letter, Thomas also wrote she sensed Taylor had been cheating and growing distant. Still, she hoped the couple would be able to raise their son together.

Brenda Johnson, after reading the letter, had her own comments to share with Taylor.

"Why did you do that?" she said. "You were not big enough to walk away or call me. I believed in you.

"... At what time -- at what age -- how will I tell Logan what happened to his mother?"

Taylor also pleaded guilty in February to an unrelated charge of armed robbery in connection to a holdup in April 2007 at a Village Pantry store in Lafayette.

He was sentenced Thursday to 50 years for the voluntary manslaughter charge and 10 years for arson, with those sentences to be served at the same time.

He received 10 more years in prison for the robbery, to be served after the other terms.

Taylor cannot appeal his sentence under terms of the plea agreement. He also must pay $7,799 in restitution to the family for funeral costs.

The judge, noting the tension in the magistrate's court, urged the family to let go of any grudges they had.

"No one understands what happened," Don Johnson said.

"I hope people don't act on the threats. No matter the sentence, there's nothing that can bring her back."

April 11, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Sex offender gets 7 years, 6 months in prison for groping woman

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man with prior felony convictions for child molesting and failing to register as a sex offender was sentenced today to seven years and six months in prison for groping a woman.

The sentence was the maximum that Chester E. Leloup, 61, could receive under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Leloup pleaded guilty in December to criminal confinement, a Class D felony, and to being a habitual offender.

According to court documents, a woman told Lafayette police that she was walking into Home Hospital on Aug. 3 when a man - claiming to be her brother - attempted to hug and kiss her.

She said the man, later identified as Leloup, also grabbed her breast. The woman was not physically injured.

Police suspected Leloup because of similar complaints against him made outside St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

Leloup was convicted in 1996 of child molesting in Benton County. He was released from prison about a year later.

A six-member Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 jury found him guilty in February 2006 of failing to register as a sex offender.

Deputy prosecutor Laura Zeman said Leloup's sentence handed down today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 will be served after he completes the Superior Court 5 sentence.

April 9, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper Editorial

Proactive approach deters crime

Knock on wood, Tippecanoe County hasn't experienced that kind of violence, and Lafayette police generally report crime trended downward between 2006 and 2007. That said, countywide crime figures indicate slight increases in violent crimes and property crimes from 1999 through 2005.

As the county's crime stats ticked up, area police have addressed problems, reporting more arrests for illegal possession of weapons and robbery. But traditionally police work is reactionary, responding after a crime is reported. That's in the process of changing here.

The first step to addressing any problem is identifying what and where specific crimes are occurring, then figuring out what might be the cause. Tippecanoe County already is addressing these issues.

A federal grant provided the county with funds to hire an investigator and purchase computers to track crimes, gang activities and arrests.

Kathy Redd, an investigator in the prosecutor's office, leads this effort, which includes working with rental property owners and crime watch groups to improve safety in the community.

It is refreshing to see residents and property owners working with law enforcement officials to curtail crimes. The proactive eyes and ears of neighborhood crime watch members, coupled with the efforts of rental property owners to landscape their apartments in a way to minimize crime, will send a message to the criminals and gangs that there is no safe haven to practice their trade.

In the meantime, the tracking figures provided by Redd and liaison officers at Lafayette police and the Tippecanoe sheriff's department will beef up patrols in problem areas, sending the message to the nefarious souls to take their enterprises somewhere else -- preferably somewhere outside our county and state.

The collaboration of residents, rental property owners, police and the prosecutor's office obviously won't end crime in Tippecanoe County. But the design of the grant and Redd's efforts will give residents and law enforcement officials the tools needed to make it more difficult for criminals and gang members to operate.

Crime flourishes when people allow it to exist. We applaud Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Redd, the rental property owners and residents for keeping Tippecanoe County safe, and we encourage others to get involved and learn what they might do to discourage crime.

April 7, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Anti-Crime Initiative Taking Shape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG
svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Since December, Kathy Redd has been meeting with rental property owners and neighborhood associations in Tippecanoe County to learn more about concerns they have regarding safety in the community.

The responses that Redd, an investigator with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, received were almost uniform in each focus group.

"Almost unanimously, they were experiencing struggles with drug dealers living in the area and illegal activity happening on and near their property," she said. "They're frustrated about not being able to do anything about it, about not having the tools to help."

But some help will come soon.

Redd is the local coordinator for Project Safe Neighborhoods, an anti-crime and anti-gang initiative larger cities nationwide have successfully used to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism.

For months she has been gathering statistics and working on a 267-page manual -- completed last week -- that will be used to help rental property managers. Redd said the first six- to eight-hour training class could begin by late May.

"We're looking forward to kicking out the program and getting the community behind us and engaged," she said. "We want the community to know that they can help make a difference. ... We really want to engage both tenants and landlords to become partners so that they do not have to live around illegal activity."

Last summer, the prosecutor's office received a $52,398 grant for the federal Project Safe Neighborhoods program. So far, it has been used to hire Redd and buy notebook computers so that Pat Harrington's office, Lafayette police, and Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies can track and analyze trouble spots.

Harrington, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor, said the goal is to take a multiprong proactive and reactive approach in crime fighting "before it gets out of hand.

"It's a situation of recognizing the crime -- seeing that there's already been successful programs developed by other cities and bringing it here to Lafayette to implement."

A big part of Project Safe Neighborhoods involves working closely with rental property owners and managers and neighborhood associations, he said.

That's good news to Kyle Gingrich-Fulks, who grew up in the historic Perrin neighborhood just east of Lafayette's downtown and is co-chairwoman of its neighborhood association. An anti-crime committee was established last fall to help deal with issues that include transiency and loitering.

"We just had a meeting ... and talked about what we can do preventatively to tackle crime," she said. "I do think that people are more aware now. They aren't afraid to call police if they see something suspicious.

"It doesn't mean that crime won't happen, but it's a step in the right direction."

The Perrin neighborhood soon plans to put up signs showing that it has an active neighborhood crime watch. Residents also have been encouraged to leave on porch lights to deter criminals.

Gingrich-Fulks said they also plan on approaching city officials about getting additional lighting.

"We have a lot of unity going now," she said.

Part of the training that Redd will provide to landlords includes using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design techniques, which encourages strategies such as making intruders easily observable.

Harrington said the design program would teach property managers other safety tactics: clearing bushes so that they don't cover windows, how to recognize drug labs and encouraging community policing.

Using information obtained from the Lafayette Housing Authority, Redd also compiled a list of rent-subsidized housing units in the Tippecanoe County. What she found is that 24 percent of all rental units in the community are low-income housing.

"The population is denser in those properties than it is for the average rental property in Tippecanoe County," Redd said. "The amount of people we have living in low-income housing is about 14,000. That's pretty substantial.

"It's also spread sporadically, which makes it difficult to manage."

In the Valley Center neighborhood, about 40 percent of all properties are a mix of houses and apartments for rent, said Michael Bittinger, president of its neighborhood association.

Though he said crime is not a huge problem there -- "at least not yet" -- Bittinger and his wife were active in forming the neighborhood association so that they could get to know their neighbors better.

"It's a feeling that I would like to have to be able to call my neighborhood my home," Bittinger said.

A sense of community pride is another goal of Harrington and Redd, who say that strong neighborhoods could drive out criminals.

"To criminals, that's not attractive," Harrington said. "They want to be anonymous."