



OFFICE OF THE VANDERBURGH COUNTY PROSECUTOR

DIANA L. MOERS

ADMINISTRATION BLDG. - ROOM 108
1 NW MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD
EVANSVILLE, IN 47708
(812) 435-5150 | prosecutorinfo@vanderburghgov.org

*****MEDIA ALERT*****

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CONTACT: Winston Lin
Phone: 219-242-2417

PROSECUTOR MOERS ANNOUNCES STRING OF GUILTY VERDICTS FOR JANUARY TRIALS

Evansville, IN – Prosecutor Diana Moers announces a string of jury trial wins in cases prosecuted by her office this January. The trial results for January include convictions in three murder cases - including two separate murder trials in the same week.

“I am proud to report that my office has started the year with a string of successful trial results including convictions in three murder cases - with two of those cases involving the murder of young children. We will continue to work hard for the citizens of Vanderburgh County and deliver justice with integrity, unwavering hard work and dedication to our cases. Trials require an enormous amount of time, resources and effort from my staff, and I am proud of their efforts. Without prosecutors, every single defendant would be returned into the community,” stated Prosecutor Moers.

JOHN STEVENS FOUND GUILTY OF MURDERING HIS GRANDMOTHER

On January 9, 2025, John Michael Stevens was found guilty but mentally ill of Murder by a jury. (A verdict of guilty but mentally ill is a guilty verdict and is legally distinguishable from not guilty by reason of insanity, which was not found here). The Honorable Magistrate Judge Ryan C. Reed of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court presided over the trial.

On June 2nd, 2022, at 410 E. Michigan Street, John Stevens killed Betty Stevens, his grandmother, by strangling her and punching her in the eye. Stevens stole his grandmother's credit cards and other items from her person in the process of killing her. Stevens then proceeded to go to the nearby gas station and purchased approximately \$12 worth of goods in the same attire he murdered Betty Stevens in. Soon after, John Stevens travelled to a local hotel and consumed illegal drugs known as “K2/spice”. The next morning, he went back to Betty Stevens' home and called 911 attempting to shift responsibility and not face the consequences for his actions. During this call, John Stevens said that Betty Stevens died of old age, despite obvious evidence to the contrary that Betty Stevens had suffered significant trauma.

Deputy Prosecutors Keaton Maurer and Ian Blair presented an overwhelming amount of evidence to the jury including DNA evidence, witness testimony from Stevens' own family, and testimony from medical professionals stating Betty Stevens died from manual strangulation and blunt force trauma.

Two Doctors testified as to John Stevens' sanity, and both found Stevens to be sane at the time when he committed the offense. One Doctor testified that John Stevens could have appreciated the wrongfulness of his actions because of his statements in the 911 call including Stevens saying "No officers" when he alerted authorities. "This guilty but mentally ill verdict will give Stevens the opportunity to receive the help he needs while keeping the community safe. Hopefully, this outcome gives some semblance of peace to Betty Stevens' family, friends, and the community of Evansville," stated Deputy Maurer after the trial.

Prosecutor Moers thanks Law Enforcement partners Former Detective B. Underwood, Detective M. Evans, Detective B. Gentry, Former Detective C. Jones, Confinement Officer S. McPhee, EPD Officer C. Cooper, Sgt. L. Martin, and Former Detective T. Lincoln for their exceptional work on the case, all the forensic scientists and medical professionals who testified at trial, thanks her staff Jessica Pollock, Morgan Richardville, Tiffany Lubbehusen, and Robyn Mastison for their contributions to this case and dedication to excellence, and thanks her Deputy Prosecutors Maurer and Blair for yet another win for the citizens of Vanderburgh county.

Sentencing is set for February 10, 2025. Stevens will face between 45-65 years for his crimes.

16-YEAR-OLD BOYFRIEND OF VICTIM'S MOM FOUND GUILTY IN MURDER OF 4-YEAR-OLD

On January 10, 2025, Christian Trinidad Gonzales was found guilty of Murder, a Felony. The Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court presided over the four-day jury trial.

On June 14, 2024, an unresponsive 4-year-old girl was transported to the hospital after the roommates of her mother and mother's boyfriend, the Defendant, found her laying lifeless next to the Defendant with multiple bite marks and multiple bruises on her face, body, and neck. The victim had very little brain activity upon admittance to the hospital. She later passed away on June 16.

The Defendant was reported missing from Fort Wayne by his grandmother earlier in the year and had a history of being reported missing and escaping - including previously escaping from Hillcrest the same day he had been admitted. The mother of the young victim assisted in the escape of the Defendant and was living with him, the victim, and two other roommates on Evansville's east side. To conceal the identity of the Defendant, who was reported missing at the time, the mother of the young girl, Co-Defendant in this case, gave the roommates a fake name and age. The mother was previously arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor in relation to the Defendant.

During their time in the apartment, the mother of the victim would regularly leave for work at McDonald's and leave her daughter in the care of Gonzales. The female roommates in the apartment began noticing physical injuries on the child, the child throwing up, and other strange behavior indicating the child was being abused. The roommates confronted Gonzales about the injuries on the young child, and he eventually admitted to biting her when they informed him it was caught on camera.

Officers were dispatched to the apartment on June 14 when one of the roommates arrived home from work finding the 4-year-old girl bruised and lifeless next to the Defendant on a mattress. The Defendant was calm and ran to hide when police and AMR

arrived. The Defendant hid in an upstairs bathroom for over an hour until he was discovered hiding by Detectives. Prosecutor Moers and Deputy Prosecutor Beckerle played a series of voice messages sent by the Defendant to the Co-Defendant in which he fabricated a story that a kitten named Oreó had attacked the young girl causing bruising. The Defendant also sent a series of text messages regarding the incident while hiding in the bathroom. Gonzales was using TikTok on the morning that the 4-year-old was found dead rather than taking steps to render aid or call 911.

Prosecutor Diana Moers and Deputy Prosecutor Audrey Beckerle represented the State in this case and presented testimony of multiple roommates who observed the young girl leading up to her death, photographic evidence, body camera footage from the Evansville police department, medical testimony, and cell phone data of the Defendant.

Prosecutor Moers stated, “I wanted to personally try this case to send the message that every case involving children is a high-profile matter. The life of this precious child ended needlessly because she was left in the care of someone who had no regard for her. The Co-Defendant in this case fought hard to bring the Defendant into the life of her daughter and her daughter unfortunately paid the ultimate price. This crime is one that shocks the conscious and will stay with each of us forever. No child should ever suffer like this victim. We will be asking for the maximum penalty at sentencing and will show no mercy to those who choose to take the lives of innocent children. It is not safe for this Defendant to be among us in society.”

Moers commends law enforcement officers Jonathan Helm and Paul Klein for their work on this case, as well as the dedicated AMR and police who responded first to the scene to find a young child. Moers also thanks paralegal Tiffany Lubbehusen and investigator Jen Savage for their preparation and commitment to this successful trial. Moers extends a special thank you to her Deputy Prosecutor Audrey Beckerle who is continuously dedicated to preparing and presenting top-notch trial results.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 13, 2025, in front of the Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court. The Defendant faces a maximum penalty of 65 years in prison. The Co-Defendant’s trial is scheduled for the spring.

JURY FINDS TYRON FLOWERS GUILTY OF BATTERING A PREGNANT WOMAN

On January 14, 2025, Anthony Tyron Flowers was found guilty of Domestic Battery Resulting in Bodily Injury to a Pregnant Woman, a Level 5 Felony. The Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court presided over the jury trial.

On September 4, 2024, officers were dispatched in reference to a suspect refusing to leave. The victim in this case told officers that Anthony Tyron Flowers, the father of her preborn child, threatened to kill her. The victim claimed that Flowers had been beating her up for the past few days. She told officers her children accidentally let Flowers into the house, and Flowers refused to leave. The victim testified at trial that over a three-day period, she was threatened by Defendant Anthony Flowers with her own handgun, pushed by him causing injury to her lower back, bitten on the arm by him when she fended him off - all while her five children were present in the home. The Defendant denied pushing the victim at the trial and said the marks on the victim’s body were rug burns. The jury found Anthony Flowers guilty.

Prosecutor Moers stated, “The actions of this Defendant are deplorable. The statutes in Indiana recognize the severity of battery on pregnant women and because of that, he will be facing an even harsher punishment. This grown man chose to target a completely vulnerable woman and traumatized her children in the process. We will be asking for a harsh sentence that reflects the depravity of his actions.”

Women who are in a situation of domestic violence are encouraged to reach out for help- my office, Albion, the YWCA, Holly's House, law enforcement, church groups and others are willing and ready to assist in any way we can to help remove women, their children and pets from a dangerous and potentially deadly domestic violence situations. Please reach out before it is too late."

Prosecutor Moers thanks her Deputies John Bober and Abraham Lamptey on a successful trial, and thanks Evansville Police Department Officers K. Matlock, A. Vincent, C. Scott, Z. Henderson, and Crime Scene Unit Detective B. Carpenter for their work on this case.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 14, 2025, in front of the Honorable Judge Robert J. Pigman of the Vanderburgh County Superior Court.

**THOMAS CRUSE OF "TW PROGRAMMING SERVICES"—WHO
ATTEMPTED TO USE HIS 8-YEAR-OLD SON'S NAME TO
PERPETUATE FRAUD—WAS FOUND GUILTY BY A JURY OF
FRAUD, FORGERY, AND THEFT**

On January 22, 2025, Thomas Aaron Cruse was found guilty of Fraud, Level 5 Felony; Forgery, Level 6 Felony; and Theft, Level 6 Felony. The Honorable Magistrate Judge Celia M. Pauli of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court presided over the jury trial.

On February 18, 2022, Thomas Aaron Cruse deposited a fraudulent check for \$4780.00 made out to his business, TW Programming Services. Immediately following the deposit, the Defendant withdrew \$2,000 in cash. This occurred on a Friday just before a long weekend where the banks would be closed on Monday. Over the course of the weekend, the Defendant withdrew \$500 in cash on three separate days - the max allowed for the ATM withdraw. Cruse also spent over \$800 on debit card purchases and attempted to open two personal bank accounts with Chime and Credit Karma under his name and his 8-year-old son's name. Both were denied. When the bank attempted to reach Cruse about the bounced check, he could not be contacted. The fraudulent check was reported to the Evansville Police Department who investigated the case.

Deputy Prosecutors Owen Gogarty and Erik Bryant submitted a slew of evidence at the trial including video footage, photos, and a copy of the fraudulent records proving the Defendant's guilt. The Defendant testified at the trial, however, Cruse's testimony was inconsistent with his prior statements and he was impeached by prosecutors.

Prosecutor Moers thanks her Deputies for a job well done, thanks EPD Detective N. VanCleave for his work on this case, and thanks her investigations staff Tony Carden, Jennifer Savage, and Morgan Richardville for their contributions to the case.

Prosecutor Moers stated, "My office takes financial crimes very seriously. While they are document-intensive, my office will utilize the resources needed to present a thorough case and prove the Defendant's guilt with paper at trial. If you are committing financial crimes, there will be a paper trail. These crimes should be taken seriously as they leave a wake of devastation behind, waste countless hours of institutions and private citizens alike, and diminish society's trust in business. Here it is particularly egregious that this Defendant used his own child's name to attempt to proliferate his fraud, which can have lasting negative impacts on the financial future of his child."

Sentencing is scheduled for February 10, 2025, in front of the Honorable Magistrate Judge Celia M. Pauli of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court. The Defendant will face between 1- 6 years for Fraud and 6 months - 2 ½ years for the Forgery and Theft.

SHANE HEDRICK GUILTY AS CHARGED FOR MURDER OF HIS 6-MONTH-OLD BABY

On January 30, 2025, Shane Hedrick was found guilty of Murder, a Felony; Neglect of Dependent Resulting in Death, a level 1 Felony; and Neglect of Dependent, a Level 6 Felony. The Honorable Magistrate Judge Ryan C. Reed of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court presided over the jury trial.

On January 25, 2024, Shane Hedrick called 911 and reported his child was unresponsive. During this call, Hedrick stated, "I'm going to jail." In the interview with the Detective, Hedrick admitted to striking the child the night before because the child wouldn't stop crying. Prior to his admission, the Defendant had voiced his displeasure with his role as a stay-at-home dad and complained about the status of his relationship with the mother of his two children. Pathologist James Jacobi determined the child's cause of death to be Abusive Head Trauma. Due to the injuries suffered by the deceased child, Hedrick's older child was evaluated for injuries indicative of abuse. The child was observed to have bruises in multiple different areas of their body, the pattern and location of which were abnormal.

Prosecutor Moers stated, "This is the second trial this month involving the murder of a young child. These crimes are completely preventable and must stop. These victims will be remembered by us all and I will never stop fighting hard for prevention of these types of cases nor cease the zealous prosecution of those who harm children in any way. When we appear at sentencing, we will ask the Judge to show no mercy to Defendants who kill babies and children. These are crimes which show a complete disregard for life and these defendants should spend the rest of their lives in the Department of Correction."

Deputy Prosecutors Ian Blair and Keaton Maurer represented the State in this case, presenting to the jury expert testimony from several medical and forensic professionals, photographic evidence of the injuries and the filthy conditions of the home, and the 911 call the Defendant made after the murder. The trial lasted four days, and ultimately the jury found Shane Hedrick guilty as charged.

Prosecutor Moers extends a thank you to the Sheriff Detectives and Deputies J. Hatfield, B. Fein, M. Hertweck, A. Lasher, and T. Toopes for their diligence in ensuring a solid case of evidence was available for presentation to the jury. Moers also thanks her staff Jessica Pollock, Tony Carden, Morgan Richardville, and Robyn Mastison who all work tirelessly to pursue justice for the victims of crime.

Sentencing is scheduled for February 21, 2025, in front of the Honorable Magistrate Judge Ryan C. Reed of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court.

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