

2001 Through 2010 Please look below for earlier dates.

12/14/2010

Police say a man assaulted his live-in girlfriend Sunday night in Nanticoke because he was angered she assembled and decorated their Christmas tree while he was out drinking.

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

After chastising his girlfriend, Michael T. Vanbilliard picked up the tree and hurled it at her, police said. Vanbilliard then slugged Courtney Green in the right eye, grabbed their 9-month-old child and picked up a knife to keep Green at bay, police said.

Without shoes or socks, Green fled to a neighbor's house to call police.

Vanbilliard was charged with stalking and simple assault.

According to arrest papers filed by Nanticoke police Sgt. Joe Gydosh:

Police were called to the couple's 727 S. Hanover St. home around 10:30 p.m., Sunday for the report of domestic dispute involving a knife.

Green's right eye was "bleeding, bruised and swollen" and there was blood on her shirt. She explained Vanbilliard "became angry" because she set up their Christmas tree while he was out drinking. Green said she took their child to lay down in the living room, rather than argue with Vanbilliard.

Green said Vanbilliard then picked up the tree and tossed it at her and their child. He proceeded to punch her, grab the child and threaten her with a knife, she said.

Vanbilliard told police Green was upset with him because he came home late and that she "attacked" him. He said he pushed her away and into a wall. Police said he had no explanation about what happened to the Christmas tree.

Investigators found inconsistencies with Vanbilliard's version of events. They charged him and jailed him at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

12/11/2010

Police: Nanticoke assault suspects likely fled to NYC

astaub@citizensvoice.com, 821-2052

Two brothers who police allege attacked two women in Nanticoke last week likely fled to New York City, a detective said Friday.

Police have issued arrest warrants for 23-year-old Anthony McClinton and 27-year-old Alonzo Eric McClinton, who attacked the two women as Alonzo's girlfriend tried to leave Nanticoke for New York, according to arrest papers.

Police recovered in Manhattan a car believed to have been stolen by the brothers, Nanticoke Detective Capt. William Shultz said. Authorities believe that indicates the two men could be in the city somewhere. While Alonzo McClinton lives on 48 E. Union St., in Nanticoke, Anthony McClinton lives at 2970 Walton Ave., Bronx, N.Y.

"But these people frequent back and forth all the time," Shultz said. "So they could be here today and gone tomorrow or vice versa."

The girlfriend, known only as "Star" in the police affidavit, "wanted to get away from her boyfriend and was going back to New York." Another unnamed woman said she was going to give Star a ride to the bus station in Wilkes-Barre the evening of Dec. 3, police said.

As the two left a South Hanover Street home, the McClinton brothers "came out of nowhere and grabbed Star," police said.

The brothers wrestled a knife from Star, who kept the weapon for protection, according to arrest papers. The other woman then pulled a revolver to scare the men away, police said, only to have Anthony McClinton pull a gun on her and threaten that he "would put a bullet in her head."

When the woman wouldn't give up the gun, Alonzo McClinton slammed her face into a wooden storm door, breaking the glass panel, police said. During the tussle, the woman's gun fired, sending a bullet through the door and into the bathroom, police said.

The men took the woman's gun and fled, later making their way to New York in a stolen car, police said. They each have been charged with several counts of robbery, theft by unlawful taking and simple assault.

Alonzo is also wanted by authorities in New York, Shultz said.

12/10/2010

Police News
Citizens' Voice

Police: Nanticoke man assaulted pregnant girlfriend

A Nanticoke man assaulted his pregnant girlfriend during an argument the two had last week, police said. Police charged 27-year-old Esien Ugano Mariano, 305 E. Noble St., with simple assault after they say the man picked up Nadine Calarco and threw her on a bed, bruising her arms and splitting her toenail. Calarco fled the home and met police in a parking lot, according to a criminal complaint. Police later found Mariano at the East Noble Street home, they said.

Nanticoke police activity:

Nanticoke police are also investigating the following incidents reported Thursday:

- > The theft of a snowblower from the garage of an East Green Street home.
- > The smashing of windows on vehicles parked at Luzerne County Community College on Lower Broadway Street, South Prospect Street and East Church Street.
- > The theft, from the damaged vehicle on South Prospect Street, of a Dell laptop computer, a Samsung cell phone, a Sprint wireless communication card, a Garmin GPS unit and an iPod.

12/7/2010

Nanticoke bowling alley owner sentenced on drug charges

Michael Sisak, Citizens' Voice

A bowling alley owner who turned his Nanticoke lanes into a pot-growing greenhouse must serve 30 months in prison, a federal judge said today.

George Ellis, 60, pleaded guilty in May to growing more than 1,000 marijuana plants at the L.S. Bowl-A-Rama and using phony bank accounts to conceal the profits from his drug-dealing enterprise.

In addition to the prison time, Ellis must serve three years on probation and pay \$700 in fines and assessment fees. Police executed a search warrant on L.S. Bowl-A-Rama on Nov. 20, 2009, seizing 1,151 marijuana plants, 3 pounds of processed marijuana and about \$100,000 in cash.

Federal authorities said the raid was part of an investigation into a large-scale, multi-state marijuana growing operation. According to federal prosecutors, starting around Feb. 20, 2008, Ellis deposited about \$183,520 in proceeds from interstate commerce - drug transactions - into bank accounts in the name of Ellis Investments Inc., in an attempt to "conceal and disguise the nature, location, source ownership and control" of the money.

Under federal sentencing guidelines, Ellis could have faced up to life in prison and a fine of \$4.5 million.

Ellis, however, agreed to cooperate with federal authorities, making him eligible for the lighter sentence.

12/3/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

- > Taryin Simms, of Apollo Circle, reported someone threw a brick through the rear window of her residence several times.
- > Linh Huynh, of Pennsauken, N.J., reported someone threw a rock at the windshield of his father's car, smashing the window and damaging the hood.
- > Kim Davis, of West South Street, reported someone scratched the rear bumper of her vehicle.
- > Carl Knorek, of East Grand Street, reported someone drove an all-terrain vehicle through a grassy bank area on property he owns on North Market Street, causing numerous ruts.
- > Charles Miller Jr., of Front Street, was taken into custody by city police on an outstanding warrant out of Newport Township. The suspect was turned over to Newport Township police.
- > James Popeck, of East Ridge Street, reported someone entered a property on East Broad Street and stole copper pipe from the basement.
- > Henry Levi, of South Prospect Street, reported someone stole a 4 by 8 foot sheet of plywood from his porch.

11/29/2010

Man is seeking sentence overturn

Store owner says attorneys gave him bad advice in gun equipment-to-Russia case.

tmorgan@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke sporting goods store owner who was sentenced to 32 months in prison for illegally exporting firearms to Russia is seeking to overturn his conviction, alleging ineffective assistance from his attorneys.

Mark Komoroski, of D&R Sporting Goods, says in court papers that his attorneys gave him incorrect legal advice relating to whether his knowledge of the crime was relevant to the case.

Komoroski, 48, and a co-defendant, Sergey Korznikov, were charged in 2008 with conspiring to smuggle various equipment, including rifle scopes, to unknown persons in Russia. The equipment in question had been designated a defense item by the United States and required the exporter to have a license or obtain authorization from the government.

Komoroski pleaded guilty in August 2009 to five counts of conspiracy to export defense articles from the United States without a license. He was sentenced in July to 32 months in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

In a motion to vacate filed Nov. 4, Komoroski contends he did not know the rifle scopes he exported required him to have a special license from the government.

Komoroski, representing himself, says he repeatedly advised his attorneys that he did not realize he needed a license, but they advised him that made no difference regarding his guilt or innocence.

Komoroski alleges his attorneys' interpretation of the law was inaccurate. He points to a section of the law states that a person must have "willfully" committed the crime.

That means the prosecution had to prove not only that he exported the item, but that he did so, knowing that a license was required, he says.

Korznikov has entered into a plea agreement with prosecutors.

He is scheduled to plead guilty to charges related to the case, which have not yet been publicly disclosed, on Dec. 13.

11/20/2010

Times Leader

A Berwick woman was charged last week with writing several bad checks.

Kimberly Jo Williams, 40, of Green Street, was arraigned on three counts of writing bad checks by District Judge Donald Whittaker. Williams has been tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Dec. 7.

According to court records:

The manager of the First National Bank in Nanticoke said a female passed three bad checks totaling \$2,900.

The name on the account was Ronald L. Platt, Jr., police said and the checks were made out to Patricia Smith.

Police later identified the woman as Williams, who later told police she used the money to pay rent that was late and past due electric and water bills.

11/20/2010

Times Leader

A city woman was arraigned Tuesday on charges she attempted to cash checks that did not belong to her.

Jodelle Marie Lamoreaux, 41, of South Market Street, was charged with forgery, theft by unlawful taking and two counts of criminal attempt. She was tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Nov. 30 before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

According to court papers, Lamoreaux removed a wallet and checkbook from the home of Edward Whittaker after she did some housework for him in July.

A PNC Bank employee in Nanticoke told police that someone attempted to cash Whittaker's stolen checks for \$208.26 and another time for \$602.

11/19/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Don Buganesi of Scranton reported someone slashed the two tires on his vehicle while it was parked on State Street.

- Mark Schwebke, of Tulsa, Okla., reported someone stole the copper pipes from a house he owns on West Ridge Street.
- Carmin Allabaugh of East Washington Street reported someone stole an iPod Touch from her home.
- Robin Cromer of Loomis Street reported someone egged her vehicle while it was parked in front of her home.
- Joseph Modla of Kosciuszko Street reported his motor home was egged while it was parked in his driveway.
- Harvey McAfee of Nescopeck reported someone stole his passport from his vehicle while it was parked on East Grand Street.
- Charles Goldsmith of Front Street reported someone smashed the driver's side window of his vehicle.
- David Carey of Kosciuszko Street reported someone smashed out the rear window of his vehicle.
- Michelle Dzoch of Newport Township reported her Smith and Wesson 9 mm pistol was stolen from a residence on Apollo Circle.
- Henry Novak of East Grand Street reported to police someone stole the right side taillight off his vehicle.

11/18/2010

Nanticoke man charged with raping 12-year-old girl

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens' Voice

A Nanticoke man was arraigned Tuesday on charges he raped a 12-year-old girl.

Stuart W. Weidow III, 22, of Apollo Circle, is charged with rape of a child, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse with a child and indecent assault for having sex with the 12-year-old girl between June and October of 2010.

He was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

According to the police criminal complaint, the father of the 12-year-old girl reported to police that friends told him that Weidow had sex with his daughter, which she denied.

The girl's father said he installed an infrared camera in a bag within the bedroom closet and left the residence in an attempt to catch them in the act. He told police when he entered the residence, he saw Weidow run across the hallway from his daughter's bedroom and into the bathroom. He said he confronted the two of them to find out what was going on and both denied doing anything.

After an altercation with Weidow, he left and the girl's father viewed the surveillance tape, which showed Weidow and the girl having sex. The girl told police she was secretly "dating" Weidow.

Weidow was jailed in Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. before Whittaker.

11/13/2010

City police are investigating a report of shots fired late Thursday night.

Police said the shots were fired from a small, dark-colored vehicle, with a loud exhaust, at the intersection of West Ridge and Line streets, and then on South Chestnut and East Union streets.

Witnesses told police four shots were fired at Ridge and Line streets and two at Chestnut and Union streets.

Investigators recovered shell casings from a semi-automatic handgun to confirm witness accounts of the incidents.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Nanticoke City Police Department at 735-2200.

11/12/2010

Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police activity

Nanticoke police reported the following incidents:

- > Daniel Robaczweski of Willow Street reported someone entered his home and stole a laptop computer.
- > John Kotch reported someone stole a park bench and a no dumping sign from St. Joseph's Center.
- > Donald Beldowicz of East Union Street told police someone stole a molding from the tailgate of his truck.
- > Tommyboys Restaurant on North Market Street reported someone entered a storage shed in the back of the property and stole three or four kegs of beer.
- > John Tucker of West Grand Street reported someone threw a rock at his vehicle, chipping the windshield.
- > Fatima Hadi Mahdi of Enterprise Street said someone damaged his satellite dish.
- > Kenneth Pennington of State Street reported someone stole his brother's bicycle in front of Curry Donuts on Market Street.

- > Chris Pastuszek of East Grand Street reported someone entered his vehicle and stole a New York Jets Joe Namath jersey, a cell phone and charger, and a iPod and adapter.
- > Todd Norton of East Union Street reported someone entered his vehicle and stole a GPS unit and a Connect Four game.
- > David Ader of East Union Street reported someone entered his vehicle and stole an iPod cord and a cigarette lighter air pump.
- > Laura Robaczewski of East Union Street said someone entered her vehicle and stole a GPS unit, a radar detector and a laptop computer.
- > Robert Antolik of Hillcrest Drive said someone smashed the front driver's side window of his vehicle.
- > Jennifer Brocuious of Dallas said someone broke out the back window of her vehicle parked on North Market Street.
- > John Holliday III was cited for harassment after a neighbor said he cursed and yelled while threatening her.
- > Michelle Baluta, 30, of West South Street, was charged with simple assault and harassment for assaulting her husband, Ken, and attacking him with a metal rod.
- > Brian Shotwell, 21, of East Ridge Street, was charged with violating a protection from abuse order after grabbing his girlfriend by the throat during an argument
- > Christopher S. Pelton, 35, of West South Street, is charged with simple assault and harassment for assaulting his wife during a domestic dispute.

10/8/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Police charged Courtney John Frace, 47, of Main Street, Mocanaqua, on evidence of drunken driving when he was stopped on West Main Street on Sept. 25. Police alleged Frace had a blood-alcohol level of .186 percent. An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered intoxicated with a blood-alcohol level of .08 percent. Charges of driving under the influence of alcohol and three traffic violations were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker on Friday. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Nov. 2.
- Police charged Richard Rickard, 58, of South Empire Street, Wilkes-Barre, on evidence of drunken driving when he was stopped on East Main Street on Sept. 18. Police allege Rickard had an alcohol level of .132 percent. Charges of driving under the influence of alcohol and five traffic violations were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker on Friday. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Nov. 3.
- Patrick Kelley, of Willow Street, reported two chainsaws were stolen from his vehicle.
- David Sudimark, of Chase Road, Shavertown, reported a stove was stolen from a home on East Ridge Street.

10/8/2010

Alleged PFA violations get Kingston man locked up

elewis@timesleader.com

A man with a history of violence against an ex-girlfriend was arrested on charges he twice violated a protection from abuse order, according to court records.

John Fronczkiewicz, 21, of Academy Lane, Kingston, was arraigned Wednesday afternoon by District Judge Donald Whittaker on separate counts of contempt of court. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

Fronczkiewicz was sentenced by Senior Judge Carson Brown on Sept. 28 to two months probation after he pleaded guilty to violating the PFA on Sept. 13 when he sent threatening text messages and followed Lauren Benjamin, court records indicate.

Benjamin, 18, obtained the PFA against Fronczkiewicz on Aug. 31, claiming he threatened to “end my life” if she did not move back with him and removed their infant son from daycare without her knowledge, according to the PFA affidavit.

The PFA is effective until March 16, 2002.

Two PFAs Benjamin obtained against Fronczkiewicz in 2009 and June were dismissed, court records indicate. Benjamin moved out of the Kingston residence after she claimed, according to the PFA affidavit, he punched her several times while she was feeding their infant a bottle, held a pillow over her face and locked her in a closet.

According to the criminal complaints filed by Nanticoke police:

A day after Fronczkiewicz was sentenced to two months probation, Benjamin claimed he repeatedly called her and sent threatening text messages on Sept. 29. She also claimed he contacted her friends and relatives.

Fronczkiewicz showed up at her Nanticoke residence and started yelling and screaming at her. Her father, Leo Benjamin, went outside and was told by Fronczkiewicz that his daughter “could say goodbye to her car,” the criminal complaints say.

Police alleged in the criminal complaints that Fronczkiewicz went to Benjamin’s place of employment on Tuesday and threw a bag of clothes and cursed at her.

The PFA directs Fronczkiewicz not to abuse, harass or threaten Benjamin. A hearing on the alleged PFA violations is scheduled on Oct. 19 in court.

10/7/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following incidents:

- Jason David Kotch, 31, was arrested at 11:42 p.m. Friday after allegedly threatening an ex-girlfriend near Apollo Circle. Kotch was charged with criminal mischief, two counts of stalking and disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. He is being held on a \$15,000 cash bail. His preliminary hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday in District Judge Donald Whitaker’s court.

Kotch was arrested after being seen screaming and yelling in the middle of the roadway.

Kotch told Nanticoke Sgt. Brian Williams that his ex-girlfriend told him to come over after she got off work. When he arrived, Kotch found three other people at the residence. Kotch told Williams he believed they were going to beat him with a baseball bat. Kotch’s pupils were dilated, police said.

The ex-girlfriend told police she had not dated Kotch for nine years and did not tell him to come over. She said Kotch had been harassing her the last several weeks. The ex-girlfriend was told how to file a protection from abuse order.

Kotch was put in the squad car, where he continued to yell and then kicked out the driver-side rear window of the squad car, police said. Kotch received a cut on his right hand from the broken window. He was taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for treatment before being sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

- Charles Blackwell Jr., 53, was arrested after a domestic disturbance at 9:50 a.m. Saturday at a residence on East Spring Street.

He was charged with simple assault, harassment and criminal mischief.

Blackwell is being held at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail. His preliminary hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday in District Judge Donald Whitaker’s court.

10/6/2010

Man charged after alleged crime spree

Bradley Stephen Jones faces theft counts in three municipalities, including stealing a car, firearms.

elewis@timesleader.com

City police may have prevented a robbery when they arrested a man suspected of stealing a vehicle outside a Public Square doughnut shop, according to charges filed.

Bradley Stephen Jones, 33, of Nanticoke, was apprehended Sept. 27 inside the Osterhout Free Library where police allege they found him with a note that stated, “Give me \$750 in loose bills ... Don’t try anything stupid like signal with money packs or whatever? Don’t make me use my gun ...”

Jones admitted to police, according to the complaint, that he wrote the note intending to rob a business for drug money. Jones also is facing charges in two other municipalities.

He was arraigned Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges of receiving stolen property, theft and criminal conspiracy for his alleged role in selling stolen jewelry worth \$1,400 at a pawn shop in Wilkes-Barre on Aug. 12, according to arrest and court records.

Hanover Township police charged Jones on Monday with three counts of receiving stolen property for allegedly selling three firearms at a sporting goods store on Sept. 25. The firearms were reported stolen during a burglary of a Nanticoke home, according to arrest records.

City police charged Jones with two counts each of receiving stolen property and theft, and one count each of possessing instruments of crime and criminal mischief for stealing a Jeep outside the Dunkin Donuts on Sept. 27.

According to the criminal complaint:

Pamela Elliot told police she parked her Jeep Cherokee on the side of South Main Street leaving the doors unlocked and the vehicle idling at about 9:27 a.m. She entered the Dunkin Donuts as a man, identified as Jones, held the door open for her.

Elliot said she watched Jones walk to her vehicle and drive away, the criminal complaint says.

Police said the theft was captured on surveillance cameras.

Elliot's Jeep was found at about 6:15 p.m. parked on South Washington Street.

Police found Jones sitting inside the Osterhout Free Library on South Franklin Street. When arrested, police say they found a hand-written note on his chair.

A preliminary hearing on the charges filed by city police is scheduled today in Central Court.

Jones also is scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Oct. 13 before District Judge Fred Pierantoni in Pittston on charges filed by Hughestown police.

A hearing on the charges Jones sold the stolen firearms is scheduled on Oct. 26 before District Judge Joseph Halesey, Hanover Township. Jones remained jailed Tuesday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$35,000 total bail.

10/5/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Belinda Gale Price, 45, of West Green Street, Nanticoke, was charged with three counts of simple assault and a single count of reckless endangerment after police allege she attempted to stab Alexander Sosnowski inside her residence on Sunday, according to charges filed.

Sosnowski claimed Price lunged at him with a 14-inch knife that he broke the blade from its handle at about 3 p.m., the criminal complaint says.

Sosnowski suffered a minor injury to his neck, police said.

Price was arraigned by District Judge Ronald Swank in Wright Township and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Oct. 12 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

- Police said Nicole Kalprzak, 19, of Shickshinny, and a 17-year-old female from Mocanaqua were cited for underage drinking after they were shouting obscenities in the area of Garfield Street.

- Michael Whalley, of South Walnut Street, reported eggs were thrown at his door.

- Stephen Minsavage, of South Market Street, was cited for public drunkenness after he was allegedly found intoxicated in the parking lot at Lacey's Bar.

- Julie Lee Antonik, 31, of West Broad Street, Nanticoke, was charged with retail theft after police allege she stole \$158 worth of aspirin, hygiene products and socks from Weis Markets on Sunday.

Antonik was arraigned by District Judge Ronald Swank and was released on her own recognizance. A hearing is scheduled before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

10/2/2010

Times Leader

City police report the following:

- Kevin Lohman, of East Noble Street, reported Thursday that a black vinyl tire cover was stolen from the spare tire on his vehicle.

- Kristie Healb of West Church Street, reported Thursday that someone dismantled her porch railing to steal a Mirraco bicycle that was chained to it.

- Rachel Healey of East Noble Street, reported Thursday someone stole her purse from the front seat of her vehicle.

- Jennifer Saltisiak of North End Road in Nuangola reported Thursday that someone damaged the tinted rain guard on her vehicle while it was parked on Locust Street in Nanticoke.

- Several residents on West Grand Street reported Thursday that six vehicles were keyed and/or their seats were cut while they were parked on the street and in residents' yards. One vehicle's tires were flattened.

- Carol Petrikonis of Jack'O Antiques on East Broad Street reported Thursday that someone stole 14 sections of black wrought iron fencing from behind the business.

- Nanticoke police are looking for Timothy Caruthers, 42, Pittston, on a warrant for allegedly violating a protection from abuse order, criminal trespass, harassment and stalking after Caruthers was found in his ex-girlfriend's home on South Hanover Street at 3:30 a.m. Sept. 19.

9/22/2010

Man arrested on sex assault charges

elewis@timesleader.com

A man was arraigned Tuesday on charges he sexually assaulted a teen girl after giving her marijuana and alcohol.

Matthew F. Souder, 24, of East Green Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of corruption of minors and a single count of statutory sexual assault. He was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$100,000 bail.

Police allege Souder gave the teen girl marijuana and alcohol before he sexually assaulted her inside an East Ridge Street home on July 2, according to the criminal complaint.

Souder denied the allegations, telling police during separate interviews on July 27 and July 29. Police said in the criminal complaint that Souder failed a voice examination. After he was told of the results of the exam, Souder claimed the teen girl consented to having sex, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Sept. 28 before Whittaker.

9/21/2010

Sex offender facing 15 years

Citizens Voice

A convicted sex offender from Nanticoke pleaded guilty Monday to a child pornography charge that will send him to federal prison for at least 15 years.

John Dudkiewicz, 35, faces up to 40 years.

He was arrested in October after he shared child pornography over the Internet with an undercover investigator, prosecutors say. A raid on Dudkiewicz's home turned up compact disks, DVDs and a computer containing child pornography, U.S. Attorney Francis P. Sempa said in U.S. District Court on Monday.

Because he served a six-to-12-month prison term for sexually abusing an 11-year-old girl in Wilkes-Barre in 1994, Dudkiewicz will serve a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in prison under federal law.

U.S. District Judge A. Richard Caputo scheduled sentencing for Jan. 5. Dudkiewicz has been in federal custody since his arrest.

9/11/2010

City police reported the following

Times Leader

- Michelle Sullivan, of West South Street, reported a green 20-inch bicycle was stolen from her residence.
- Walter Kinsley, of Front Street, reported a cast iron stove was stolen from his garage.
- Ruth Maley, of South Hanover Street, reported someone smashed a window on her storm door.
- Copper pipe was stolen from a home for sale on East Noble Street.
- Police cited a 14-year old boy with violating the city's curfew ordinance when he was spotted on East Noble Street at 2 a.m.
- Daniel Bacon, of East State Street, reported prescription medication and a cell phone were stolen from his residence.
- Melinda Bedford, of East Ridge Street, reported someone stole the registration plate from her motorcycle.
- Wade Smith, of Hill Street, was cited with public drunkenness when he was allegedly found intoxicated at Main and Market streets.
- Matthew Mayewski, of Honey Pot Street, was cited with public drunkenness and underage drinking when officers investigated a fight involving people near Garfield Street.

9/5/2010

A New York man, who violated his probation by traveling out of state, was arrested Friday after running from

police while dealing fake narcotics, police said.

Citizens Voice

Michael T. Horning, 34, of Babylon, N.Y., faces felony charges of fleeing apprehension and selling a counterfeit controlled substance, according to a police affidavit. He was arraigned before Magistrate Judge David Barilla. Around midnight, Horning, who is on "lifetime probation" in New York and not allowed to leave the state without permission, was seen in the driveway of his grandmother's home, according to the affidavit. Upon seeing police, he fled on foot for a block through a nearby yard before falling down in a wooded area. On the ground, officers saw a phone and plastic bag containing a white substance that appeared to be cocaine, according to the affidavit. During a cell check, he told police the substance he mixed the substance and included Anbesol, which provides a numbing effect on the tongue, to fool buyers. "Hey, I have to make money somehow," Horning said, according to police. Test showed the substance was not heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine or any other controlled substance, according to the affidavit.

9/3/2010

Nanticoke police identify woman in stabbing incident

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2115

Nanticoke police have identified the woman arrested Tuesday afternoon following a stabbing during a domestic dispute at an apartment at 267 E. Green St.

Victoria K. Shanks, 21, was taken into custody for allegedly stabbing Jeffrey Boston in his arm with a butcher knife. She faces aggravated assault and simple assault charges.

Boston, 25, told police he and Shanks, his girlfriend, were arguing all day. Police were called to the residence earlier that day when police found no signs of domestic violence. Boston told police soon after, Shanks threatened him, saying she was going to throw a knife at him if he did not leave the apartment.

Boston left, but later began to walk up the stairwell to the apartment when Shanks threw a knife down the stairwell at him and struck him in the left arm, police said. Police said when they arrived, the knife was embedded in Boston's arm and he was bleeding profusely.

Boston went downstairs to a neighbor's apartment to call for help, police said.

An emergency services medic unit from Nanticoke responded. Emergency services personnel removed the knife from Boston's arm and he was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township.

Shanks told police she didn't stab Boston and claimed she was in a bedroom with her two children, one of whom was sick all day. She claimed she heard Boston yell from the kitchen, "I can't believe you (expletive) stabbed me" and then she heard him run down the steps of the apartment.

Shanks told police Boston is upset that she ended the relationship. She said he continued to threaten her that if she left the home, he was going to "leave their children there by themselves and whatever happens to them, happens," according to the police criminal complaint.

According to police, Shanks said Boston had been pushing her around physically and harassing her all day. She said after police left the apartment, he pushed her around the apartment, bruised her arm and threw a plastic pitcher of iced tea at her that broke. The plastic struck her left hand and the right side of her face in the temple area causing injuries and small cuts, police said. Boston faces simple assault and harassment charges.

8/31/2010

Nanticoke police activity

Citizens' Voice

- > Mendel Fernandes, of West Union Street, reported someone entered his unlocked vehicle and stole his wallet.
- > Gerald Mech, of South Hanover Street, reported someone entered his garage and rummaged through his vehicle.
- > Christine Kozak, of West Noble Street, reported someone entered her vehicle, her son's vehicle and her son's girlfriend's vehicle.
- > Richard Henderson Jr., of Graham Street, Hanover Township, was cited for harassment after his stepsister reported he has been harassing her on the Internet and driving past her home.
- > Barbara Ouandaogom, of West Main Street, reported her 14-year-old daughter caught someone trying to break in their

home through a window and the suspect was scared off when her daughter screamed.

> Martin Lewis of East Main Street reported someone vandalized his son's bicycle by cutting it with a hacksaw

8/29/2010

Police Blotter

Times Leader

Police said Shawn Gallagher, 45, of East Ridge Street, was cited with stalking, criminal mischief and harassment after Richard Simon, of Nanticoke, claimed Gallagher was following him and yelling threats. Simon further alleged Gallagher smashed a window on his vehicle when it was parked on South Market Street on Aug. 16.

8/29/2010

Times Leader - Police Blotter

A man was arraigned Friday on charges he entered a former girlfriend's residence.

Jamie Todd Lohman, 36, of West South Street, Nanticoke, was charged with stalking, criminal trespass and criminal mischief. He was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

Police charged Lohman after Cecelia Moore claimed she found him inside her residence on Front Street on July 18, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Tuesday before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

8/29/2010

Nanticoke man arrested in shooting

Michael D. Rentko tells police a teenager was shot during a struggle over a gun.

mhughes@timesleader.com

Police arrested a city man for his alleged involvement in a shooting Friday that has left a juvenile in critical condition. The alleged shooter said the juvenile was his drug dealer.

Police said responded shortly after 3 p.m. Friday to a report of a shooting at 151 Park St., where Michael D. Rentko lives with his mother. Police said they found pools of blood outside the home and in its entryway, as well as on the floor and walls of its living room.

The victim of the shooting arrived at Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre approximately 30 minutes later, but was then transported by ambulance to Geisinger Wyoming Valley because Geisinger South does not have an emergency room. Police said the victim told emergency workers his name is Shawn Hamilton, 16. Nanticoke police said yesterday they believe he is from the Philadelphia area. The victim underwent surgery Friday night and was listed in critical condition Saturday.

Police said Rentko, 26, returned to his Park Street residence at approximately 10:30 p.m. Friday and told police on scene he wanted to speak with them. He was taken to the Nanticoke Police Station and interviewed.

According to court documents, Rentko told police he knows the victim by the name Chiz and has purchased heroin from him many times. Rentko told police Chiz came to his home Friday and accused Rentko of planning to rob him. Rentko said the juvenile argued with him and eventually pointed a gun at him.

Police said Rentko told them Chiz held the gun with one hand, and walked towards him. Rentko told police he performed a "tactical-type" move, grabbing the hand and wrist with which Chiz was holding the gun, pushing the gun downward. During this motion, the gun went off, Rentko told police, striking Chiz in the leg.

Rentko's mother and neighbor, Candice Solomon, then ran into the room and aided Chiz by placing towels over his wounded leg, Rentko said. One of the two women then called 911, he said. Rentko said he then helped Chiz outside and into the juvenile's car, a green Volvo, and drove him to Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre. During the trip, Rentko said he stopped at a convenience store at Chiz's request, where the boy purchased a coffee.

Rentko left the hospital after police were alerted, police said.

Police said physical evidence at the home differed from the story Rentko told them. Police said they found pellets from a shotgun shell in the living room wall, and other shotgun shells elsewhere in the home. Rentko's neighbor, Solomon, also reported seeing Rentko holding a "long gun" after the incident. Rentko denied ever holding a firearm during the incident.

The weapon used in the shooting has not yet been recovered, police said.

Rentko was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whitaker, Nanticoke, on Saturday on charges of aggravated assault and recklessly endangering another person. He is being held at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

8/28/2010

Victim of shooting gets wrong hospital

Nanticoke police investigate a Friday afternoon incident at a Park Street address.

mhughes@timesleader.com

A male shot in the leg in the city Friday afternoon tried to check himself into the emergency room at a hospital that doesn't have one.

Nanticoke city police said they responded to a report of a shooting shortly after 3 p.m. Approximately 30 minutes later, a gunshot victim sought treatment at Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre, which does not have an emergency room.

Police said they believe the victim, a male, was shot in the right lower leg inside 151 Park St. shortly after 3 p.m. The victim, presumed to be a juvenile, is believed to be from the Philadelphia area, police said. Police have not released the victim's name.

Following the shooting, the victim fled the scene in a vehicle, a green Volvo, which Wilkes-Barre police later recovered from Church Street., near Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre, police said. It is not clear whether the victim drove himself to the hospital or was driven there by another person.

The victim sought emergency medical treatment at the Geisinger South, police said, but was taken by ambulance to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township. Though the South Wilkes-Barre hospital offers some urgent care services, serious trauma can only be handled at Geisinger Wyoming Valley, Geisinger's website states. Wilkes-Barre police, acting on a report that the victim may have been armed himself, met the ambulance at the Wilkes-Barre Fire Department Headquarters, 20 E. Ross St., and accompanied emergency responders to the hospital. Wilkes-Barre police said they did not find a weapon on the victim.

The Nanticoke house where the shooting allegedly occurred was blocked by yellow police tape Friday afternoon.

Wilkes-Barre police said they have turned over the vehicle recovered on Church Street to Nanticoke police.

The victim's condition was not available Friday night because he was still in surgery, a nursing supervisor said.

8/24/2010

Nanticoke police investigating teen's beating

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

A teenage boy was beaten and robbed Saturday night at the intersection of Kosciuszko and Noble streets in Nanticoke, police said.

The 15-year-old said he was approached by three masked males, who stole a small amount of money and the soda he just purchased at the nearby CVS Pharmacy.

The suspects punched the boy in the ribs and back and knocked him to the ground before fleeing on foot, police said. Police said the boy was treated at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for pain to his ribs and back.

The robbery occurred around 9:15 p.m.

Anyone with information on the incident is asked to call police at (570) 735-2200.

8/23/2010

Police investigate attempted robbery

Times Leader

Police said they are investigating an attempted armed robbery at Uni Mart on East Main Street on Saturday.

Police said a male entered the store and jumped over the counter while holding a large knife at about 4 a.m. The suspect grabbed the clerk and said, "Give me all your money or I will kill you," police said.

The clerk fought with the suspect removing the knife and a bandanna that covered the suspect's face.

The suspect fled the store and was last seen in a dark color SUV, police said.

Police described the suspect as a black male, medium height, thin build and was wearing a light blue long sleeve shirt, blue jeans and white sneakers. Anyone with information about the attempted robbery is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

8/19/2010

Police searching for Kingston man suspected in assault

Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police are searching for a Kingston man who allegedly broke into his ex-girlfriend's house, hit her and damaged her vehicle, then crashed into a mail carrier's vehicle with a stolen car and fled the scene.

Kenneth Lashall White, 33, also known as Shawn White, faces charges of burglary, criminal trespass, simple assault, criminal mischief and harassment, as well as causing an accident, reckless driving, driving with a suspended license and receiving stolen property.

Nanticoke Detective Capt. William Shultz said a warrant has been issued for White's arrest.

According to arrest papers, Nanticoke police were called to White's ex-girlfriend's West Church Street home shortly before 9 a.m. Aug. 12. Sheenita Brogdon said she was sleeping when White kicked in her door and began hitting her in the face and head. Brogdon said her son removed White and she ran to call 911. She told police White had poured sugar in her car's gas tank and slashed the tires.

Brogdon said White was driving a red car with Pennsylvania license plate HJX-4024. Shortly after 9 a.m., Nanticoke police responded to a crash at Fairchild and West Broad streets. A letter carrier said the red car failed to stop for a stop sign, almost hit an oil truck, then hit the front end of his mail vehicle.

The car, a 2002 Hyundai, been reported stolen in Hanover Township.

Anyone with information on White's whereabouts may call police at 570-735-2200.

8/18/2010

Sex-assault charges forwarded to court

Daniel John Drury Sr. says he didn't rape child. Now 18, woman testifies he did in '02.

elewis@timesleader.com

Daniel John Drury Sr. emerged from the tiny courtroom on Tuesday saying charges he raped a child are false.

Drury, 45, proclaimed his innocence after his preliminary hearing when the woman, now 18 years old, testified he raped her just days after her 11th birthday in November 2002.

"After my birthday, he raped me," she said.

After nearly 45 minutes of testimony, District Judge Donald Whittaker determined prosecutors established a case against Drury, sending charges of rape, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and corruption of minors to Luzerne County Court.

Drury remains jailed at the county prison for lack of \$100,000 bail.

The woman was the only witness called by Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts to testify. During questioning by Drury's attorney, Thomas Cometa, the woman said she did not report the alleged rape to her mother until after telling a boyfriend and a family counselor in 2008.

Drury denied the allegations when he was questioned by police in November and December 2008.

The woman testified she was lying in bed when she heard the front door slam shut and someone rummaging downstairs for several minutes. She said she then heard a person walking up the stairs.

She said she went to her open bedroom door when she encountered Drury in the doorway. She said Drury pushed her onto the bed and raped her.

"He said, 'Don't worry, you'll like it.' I tried to yell, but he kept his hand over my mouth," she said. She testified Drury picked up her pajamas and threw them at her.

"He was walking out of my bedroom, he turned around and said, 'Happy Birthday,' " she said.

Cometa asked why she didn't scream for her mother, who was sleeping in another bedroom, when she heard someone in the house.

"I can't remember," she replied. She said she remembered throwing her pajamas in the garbage after the alleged rape.

Drury is scheduled to be formally arraigned in county court on Oct. 29.

8/17/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- Two boxes were reported stolen from the laundry room at East Side Apartments.

- Stephanie Gleco, of State Street, reported her son's mountain bicycle was stolen from her residence.
- Alan Wasielewski, of West Union Street, reported prescription medication was stolen from his vehicle.
- Peter Woychio, of West Broad Street, and Anthony Decker, of South Walnut Street, were cited for harassment after both men claimed they had been pushed by the other.
- Sheila Gallagher and her daughter, Nicole Gilroy, of East Kirmar Avenue, were cited for disorderly conduct and harassment after three disturbances at Gilroy's former boyfriend's residence. Gallagher and Gilroy allegedly showed up at the former boyfriend's residence three times, choking and kicking a woman.
- Rachael Smith, of East Broad Street, reported someone stole the registration and insurance cards from her vehicle.
- Robert Belcher III, of West Main Street, was cited for disorderly conduct, Robert Belcher Jr., of Espy Street, was cited for disorderly conduct, harassment and public drunkenness, and Kevin Price, of Barney Street, Larksville, was cited for disorderly conduct and harassment after a disturbance at Uni Mart, East Main Street.
- Richard Opalski, of South Walnut Street, reported someone damaged his garden and ornaments.
- Edward Allison Jr., and Lynn Shockey, of State Street, were cited for public drunkenness when they were allegedly found on State Street.
- Paula Pucci reported someone threw a brick that smashed a window at a building on East Union Street.
- Thomas Kane, of South Walnut Street, reported someone punctured the front tire on his motorcycle.
- Sara Oawloski, of Mack Street, reported someone smashed two windows on her vehicle.
- Lisa Marie Filip, of Apollo Circle, and Thomas Filip, of Metcalf Street, Wilkes-Barre, were cited for public drunkenness after a disturbance at Apollo Circle.
- James Popeck, of East Ridge Street, reported someone threw a brick that smashed a window on his vehicle. A tire on Popeck's vehicle was flattened.
- David Keene, 46, of East State Street, Larksville, was charged with simple assault and stalking after he allegedly grabbed his estranged wife on South Walnut Street on Aug. 8. He was released without bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Aug. 24 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.
- Police said Bruce John Kruszka Jr., 32, of Apollo Circle, was charged with simple assault and harassment after he allegedly assaulted his girlfriend in violation of a protection-from-abuse order on Friday. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$1,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Aug. 24 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

8/16/2010

Man accused of assaulting woman, crashing stolen car

elewis@timesleader.com

A man assaulted a woman during a burglary and crashed into a U.S. Postal Service truck as he sped away in a stolen vehicle on Thursday, according to charges filed.

Police accused Kenneth Lashall White, 33, last known address as Pierce Street, Kingston, of forcing open a locked bedroom door and assaulting a woman inside a residence on West Church Street. White sped away in a 2002 Hyundai that he crashed into a postal truck on Fairchild Street, police allege.

White is facing two counts of criminal mischief, and one count each of burglary, simple assault, harassment, criminal trespass, receiving stolen property, unauthorized use of a vehicle, accidents involving damage to vehicle, driving with a suspended license and three traffic violations.

The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

According to the criminal complaints:

Sheenita Brogdon told police she was sleeping in a bedroom when her former boyfriend, White, kicked in two locked doors and assaulted her.

Brogdon escaped and called 911 while her son struggled with White, the criminal complaint says.

White then drove away in a small red vehicle, police said.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Brogdon obtained a protection-from-abuse order against White prior to the alleged assault. She later learned that White had slashed a tire and poured sugar in her vehicle's gasoline tank, according to the criminal complaint.

While police were questioning Brogdon, officers learned about a hit-and-run accident at Fairchild and West Broad streets involving a small red vehicle.

Patrick O'Brien, a letter carrier, told police that the driver of the small red vehicle passed through a stop sign and crashed into his postal truck. O'Brien said the red vehicle nearly collided with an oil tanker truck at the intersection,

according to the criminal complaints.

Police learned that the red vehicle was reported stolen to the Hanover Township Police Department on Thursday.

8/7/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- Jaclin Olshefski, of Burnett Street, reported a bookbag was stolen from her vehicle when it was parked on Ridge Street.
- Fatima Mohammed, of Enterprise Street, reported someone scratched her vehicle.
- Neil Minnich, of Hill Street, reported someone stole coins and compact discs from his vehicle.
- Martha Aregood, of West Grand Street, reported someone vandalized her vehicle.
- Nazarene Natalini, of South Hanover Street, reported someone smashed a window on her vehicle.
- Police cited Michael Engle, of East Broad Street, with public drunkenness after he was found lying on the road at Walnut and Broad streets.
- John Mayeski, of West Main Street, reported someone entered his vehicle and stole compact discs.
- Shawn Gallagher, of East Ridge Street, reported someone shattered the patio glass door at his home.
- Michael Buckley, 18, of East Washington Street, Kathy Moore, 18, of Roberts Street, and Matthew Souder, 25, of East Green Street, were cited with disorderly conduct and public drunkenness after a disturbance at West Washington and South Hanover streets.
- Police arrested John Joseph Everhart, 33, of Honey Pot Street, Nanticoke, on suspicion of drunk driving and simple assault after an altercation with his mother.

Everhart was charged with simple assault, reckless endangerment, unauthorized use of a vehicle, driving under the influence, public drunkenness, drivers required to be license and restriction on alcoholic beverages.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Everhart got into an argument with his mother in a vehicle when she refused to purchase a bottle of liquor for him on July 30. Everhart removed the ignition key from the vehicle that coasted to a stop in the area of River and Garfield streets.

Everhart's mother exited the vehicle and Everhart sped away. He later returned with the vehicle and performed doughnuts in a parking lot, nearly hitting his mother, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Aug. 10 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

8/6/2010

Police said a drunken man wrestled control of a car away from his mother July 30 because she wouldn't stop at the liquor store to buy him a bottle of vodka

Citizens Voice

After the woman left the car, John J. Everhart, 33, drove the car at her and began doing "doughnuts" several feet away from her, police said.

Everhart is charged with simple assault, recklessly endangering another person, unauthorized use of an automobile, driving under the influence of alcohol, driving without a license and public drunkenness.

According to arrest papers:

Everhart's mother, Ann, called police to say her son was trying to run her over with her car near River and Garfield streets. She said he became angry when she refused to buy him vodka because all the alcohol he had left was a 12-ounce Busch beer he was drinking. When she refused to stop, he reached over and pulled the keys out of the ignition while the vehicle was still moving. The vehicle lost power and the woman coasted to the side of the road.

When his mother got out of the vehicle, Everhart restarted the car and began doing burnouts. Everhart then drove the vehicle near his mother, doing "doughnuts" in gravel off the roadway.

He soon exited the vehicle to argue with his mother. Police arrived and took him into custody.

8/5/2010

Nanticoke man charged with perjury in drug case

Kelly Monitz - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man who police say lied about his identity following his arrest on drug trafficking and manufacturing charges faces perjury and other charges.

Jorge Correa, 31, was arraigned Monday on charges of perjury, delivery of a controlled substance, criminal use of a communication facility, criminal conspiracy, unsworn falsification to authorities and false identification in two separate criminal complaints.

He remains in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in Wilkes-Barre in lieu of \$250,000 bail on the drug charges and an additional \$50,000 on the perjury charges.

Correa identified himself as Jose Cuevas when arrested and arraigned on charges of delivery of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance and criminal use of a communication facility on July 23.

A U.S. marshal contacted Sugarloaf Township police and informed them about Cuevas' correct identity on July 30, court papers said. An additional investigation found that Correa was wanted for multiple drug charges in Massachusetts, court papers said.

7/30/2010

Export scheme brings jail term

Businessman conspired to illegally export military equipment to Russia.

tmorgan@timesleader.com

The owner of a Nanticoke sporting goods store was sentenced Thursday to 32 months in federal prison for conspiring with another person to illegally export military equipment to Russia.

Mark Komoroski, 48, owner of D & R Sporting Goods, was also ordered by U.S. District Judge Edwin Kosik to pay a \$10,000 fine.

Komoroski and a co-defendant, Sergey Korznikov of Moscow, were charged in January with conspiring to smuggle equipment, including rifle scopes, firearm magazines, face shields and other military equipment out of the United States to be sold to unknown persons in Russia.

Korznikov was involved with Tactica Ltd., a Moscow-based company that sells rifle optics, binoculars, boots, back packs and other hunting and paramilitary equipment.

A search warrant affidavit filed in 2006 said authorities believed Komoroski had illegally exported hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of military equipment over a several-year period.

The case grew out of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs, which worked in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and several other federal agencies.

"This investigation is another example of how technology, in the wrong hands, could reduce the advantages that our nation's law enforcement and military personnel currently possess," said John P. Kelleghan, special agent in charge of the ICE Homeland Security Investigations unit in Philadelphia.

"Working with our law enforcement partners, ICE will continue to aggressively pursue those individuals who have no regard for the safety of those who protect our nation," he said.

7/29/2010

Child rape suspect nabbed after 2 years on the run

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

Child rape suspect Daniel J. Drury's time on the run is over.

Police have charged the Nanticoke man with raping an 11-year-old girl at a Pine Street home in October 2002.

Drury was recently captured in Florida, where he fled two years ago after the girl levied the allegations against him, police said.

The 45-year-old is charged with rape, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and corruption of minors.

According to arrest papers:

The girl came forward in September 2008 and told police Drury raped her in a bedroom around her 11th birthday. She said Drury entered the bedroom while she was trying to sleep, took off her pajamas and held her down on the bed. She said she tried to scream for help, but he covered her mouth with his hand.

Drury raped her and then threw her pajamas at her and said, "Happy birthday," as he left the room, the girl said.

The girl said she had trouble sleeping after the incident and suffered through nightmares for years. She said she was attending counseling at the time she came forward to police, but police officers were the first people she ever told about

the alleged assault.

Drury met with Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz and Officer Robert Lehman several times after the allegations were made. He denied sexually assaulting the girl.

Shortly after police told him he was going to be charged, Drury fled the state, Shultz said Wednesday.

"We did our investigation and felt the victim was credible. He knew he was going to be arrested," Shultz said.

Drury was a wanted man since then, but had no contact with police until a recent traffic stop, police said.

Drury was arraigned Wednesday morning and jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 cash bail.

7/29/2010

Cops: Nanticoke man sexually assaulted girl

Police allege attack occurred in 2002 on the weekend of her 11th birthday in Nanticoke.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man was charged Wednesday after Nanticoke police said he sexually assaulted an 11-year-old girl.

Daniel John Drury, Sr., 45, of Center Street, was arraigned on charges of rape, aggravated indecent assault and indecent assault in Wilkes-Barre Central Court.

According to a criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police, the girl, in September 2008, told police Drury sexually assaulted her.

The alleged incident occurred between September and October 2002, according to court papers.

The girl said when she was 11 years old, on the weekend of her birthday, Drury sexually assaulted her at a home on Pine Street in Nanticoke. The girl said she never told anyone about the incident.

The girl said that the Friday or Saturday before her birthday, Drury came into her bedroom and held her down on the bed and told her, "Don't worry, you will like it."

The girl said Drury sexually assaulted her and she tried to yell, but Drury covered her mouth with his hand.

The girl said Drury took off her pajamas and his pants, and had sexual intercourse with her, and that she began to cry.

Drury then picked up the girl's pajamas, threw them at the girl and said "Happy birthday," and left the room.

The girl said she could smell alcohol on Drury's breath and that after the incident Drury never spoke about what happened.

After the incident, the girl said she would have nightmares and that she couldn't sleep.

Police interviewed Drury in November 2008, and police said he denied the allegations made by the girl.

In December 2008, police again spoke with Drury, and he again denied the allegations.

Detective Captain William Shultz could not be reached for comment about the time lapse between the initial investigation and Wednesday's arraignment.

Drury was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$100,000 bail. He was scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Aug. 17 before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

7/29/2010

Police said they arrested Michael A. Buckley, 18, of East Washington Street, on drug charges Saturday.

Times Leader

Police said they were taking Buckley into custody on an unrelated charge when they found in his pocket a fake metal lighter with five pills inside. Police allege one pill contained hydrocodone, a controlled substance, and two others contained substances for which a prescription is required.

7/28/2010

Police charge Nanticoke man with raping 11-year-old

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Police have charged a Nanticoke man with raping an 11-year-old girl at a Pine Street, Nanticoke, home in October 2002.

Daniel J. Drury Sr., 45, is charged with rape, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault, and corruption of minors.

Drury was arraigned this morning and jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 cash bail.

He maintains his innocence, claiming an ex-wife forced the girl to make the allegations.

According to arrest papers:

The girl came forward in 2008 and told police Drury raped her in her bedroom around her 11th birthday. She said Drury snuck into her bedroom while she was trying to sleep around 3 a.m., took off her pajamas and held her down on her bed. She said she tried to scream for help, but he covered her mouth with his hand. Drury raped her and then threw her pajamas at her and said "Happy Birthday" as he left the room, the girl said. The girl said she had trouble sleeping after the incident and had nightmares for years. She said she was going to counseling at the time she came forward to police, but police were the first people she ever told about the alleged assault.

Drury met with Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz and Officer Robert Lehman several times after the allegations were made. He denied sexually assaulting the girl, and blamed the allegations on his ex-wife.

7/28/2010

Nanticoke man charged with distributing child porn

Citizens Voice

Federal authorities on Tuesday charged a Nanticoke man with distributing child pornography on the Internet. John Dudkiewicz, 35, now faces a mandatory minimum federal prison term of 15 years if convicted. Authorities accuse Dudkiewicz of receiving and distributing child pornography on his computer in October 2009. Dudkiewicz could face up to 40 years in federal prison, the U.S. Attorneys Office said.

Records show Dudkiewicz was previously in trouble for child sex charges.

In 1994, he sexually abused an 11-year-old girl who was staying with a foster family in Wilkes-Barre, entering her room as she tried to sleep and ignoring her pleas to stop, records show.

Luzerne County Judge Hugh Mundy sentenced Dudkiewicz to six to 12 months in county prison on charges of indecent assault of a child and corruption of minors.

Dudkiewicz then became a sexual offender who was required to tell police of his address changes as part of the state's Megan's Law. Arrest papers say police could not locate Dudkiewicz until he surfaced as a suspect in the possible sexual assault of a 5-year-old child. While no charges were ever filed in the alleged sexual assault, Dudkiewicz was charged with failing to register his address with state police.

Luzerne County Judge Gifford Cappellini then sentenced Dudkiewicz to three months house arrest.

7/28/2010

City police reported the following incidents:

Citizens Voice

Adam Seman of Center Street reported someone entered his vehicle and stole an Apple iPod, an iPod stereo jack and a carton of cigarettes.

Delores Jennings of Center Street reported someone threw a large rock at her vehicle, striking the trunk and smashing a rear window.

Lynn Ganaposki of Phillips Street reported someone threw a brick at the rear of her vehicle, smashing the window.

Three vehicles, one of Oak Street, one of Jones Street, and one of Center Street, were entered, but nothing was taken.

Rhonda Hidock, of Phillips Street, reported someone smashed the rear window of her son's vehicle.

Tara Koffler of East Broad Street reported someone cracked the windshield of her vehicle.

Susan Harvey of Jones Street reported someone damaged the driver's side upper quarter section and trunk of her vehicle with a large brick.

Kyle Capie reported someone entered his vehicle and stole a camcorder and an 800-watt amplifier.

George Williams of Center Street reported someone entered his vehicle and stole the registration card, insurance card and a bag which contained a small amount of change.

Denise Salzo of East Ridge Street reported someone tried to force entry into her home.

Mark Everhart of Honey Pot Street was arrested after allegedly violating a protection from abuse order.

Joshua Ruminski of West Noble Street was arrested after allegedly violating a protection from abuse order.

Michael Buckley, 18, was charged with trespassing for illegally entering his father's Agostina Drive home and then drug charges for illegally possessing five prescription pills

Police charged Robert Kurtinitis, 40, of West Eighth Street, Dallas, with retail theft and resisting arrest for trying to steal \$333.96 worth of razor replacement cartridges from Weis Market.

7/27/2010

Nanticoke man accused of manufacturing heroin at home

Kelly Monitz - Citizens Voice

Sugarloaf Township police seized about \$10,000 in heroin and drug-manufacturing paraphernalia from a Nanticoke man's home following his arrest Friday on drug charges, Sgt. Joshua Winters said.

Jose L. Cuevas allegedly sold a brick of heroin - or 50 individual bags - with a street value of \$750 to a confidential informant working with officers from Sugarloaf and Hazleton as members of the Luzerne County Drug Task Force. Officers arrested him shortly after the buy.

A search of Cuevas' home turned up scales, a small scoop, a tea strainer, a coffee grinder with raw ground heroin, numerous bags for packaging heroin and an agent used to cut the drug, Winters said. Officers also found 122 grams of heroin concealed in a hair spray can with a false bottom, Winters said.

Fine, powdered heroin dusted all of the paraphernalia, and Winters estimated the amount of heroin in the coffee grinder alone had a street value between \$750 and \$1,500.

The seized items took up a 2-foot-by-2-foot space on a table and contained everything needed for a drug manufacturing and selling operation, Winters said.

7/25/2010

Dean M. Gavrish, 41, and Angel Ann Halchak, 34, were charged with simple assault and harassment after a disturbance at their Coal Street residence on Sunday.

Times Leader

Halchak claimed Gavrish left her at a tavern in Edwardsville. When she arrived home, she alleged Gavrish punched her in the face, the criminal complaint says.

Gavrish claimed Halchak arrived home from the tavern and punched him in the face.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Aug. 10 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

7/24/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- James Lacey, of East Main Street, reported someone stole 12 bar stools from a garage on his property.
- Jean Morris, of Kosciuszko Street, reported a front window was smashed at her residence.
- Lorraine Clishman, of East Ridge Street, reported a 20-foot ladder was stolen from her yard.
- Jennifer Piggot, of Jifkin Street, reported several frog lawn ornaments and a plastic elephant were stolen from her yard.
- Ron Sokoloski, of East Main Street, reported vegetables were stolen from his garden.
- Michael Whalley, of South Walnut Street, reported three solar yard ornaments were stolen from the yard.
- Dennis Bartuska, of East Main Street, reported someone threw a brick that damaged his vehicle.
- Walter Strycznski, of East Spring Street, reported someone stole prescription medication from his vehicle.
- Police said someone threw a brick that smashed a window at D&R Sporting Goods, Fairchild Street.
- Stanley Schmidt, of Nanticoke, reported someone cut the cable and phone lines to his business on East Broad Street.
- Cindy Goss, of West South Street, reported someone threw baking powder on her vehicle.
- Several city residents on Thursday reported someone spray-painted their vehicles with green paint.

7/23/2010

Cops: Man had child porn

Jamell L. Amos of Nanticoke is jailed on \$100,000 bail. His hearing is set Aug. 10.

elewis@timesleader.com

Investigators allege they uncovered several movies showing children involved in sex acts that were saved on a computer.

A Nanticoke man admitted to investigators on Thursday that he downloaded child pornography because he was "curious," according to charges filed.

Jamell L. Amos, 34, was arrested after investigators executed a search warrant at his East Ridge Street apartment

Thursday morning. Investigators allege they uncovered several movies showing children involved in sex acts that were saved on a computer.

Amos was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker on three counts each of possession of child pornography and dissemination of child pornography, and a single count of criminal use of communication facility. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$100,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

A Lackawanna County detective learned June 4 that images of child pornography were being viewed on an Internet file-sharing program. Investigators traced the images to a computer linked to Amos' residence, and Nanticoke police and the Luzerne County Detectives Office served a search warrant just before 8:30 a.m.

Investigators told Amos that a computer linked to the residence was being used to download images of children engaged in sex acts. Amos told them he had Limewire, an Internet file sharing program, that he uses to download music, movies and porn. He admitted he used special keyword searches to locate child pornography.

Investigators said a preliminary forensic examination of the computer revealed three movies of children engaged in sex acts.

Amos said he was "curious" when asked why he downloaded child porn.

He said the more illicit videos he watched, "the more he was getting into it."

Amos asked investigators, "Why the (expletive) are people do(ing) this?" He said he saved child porn images and videos on DVDs he wanted to give to police to investigate.

Amos said he instead smashed the DVDs into pieces, which he recycled.

A computer and other items were seized from Amos' apartment.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Aug. 10 before Whittaker.

7/23/2010

City police reported the following incidents, arrests and citations Thursday

Citizens' Voice

> Mark Cramer, of South Chestnut Street, reported a vandal spray painted the rear driver-side door and window of her car with green paint.

> Jacqueline Koslowski, of East Green Street, reported a vandal spray painted the front door of her house with green paint.

> Irene Hamburger, of East Green Street, reported a vandal spray painted the back window and trunk area of her car with green paint.

> Irene Felch, of East Green Street, reported a vandal spray painted her garage door with green paint.

> James Lacey, of East Main Street, reported 12 bar stools stolen from a garage on his property.

> Jean Morris of Kosciuszko Street, reported a vandal broke the front window of her house.

> Dennis Bartuska, of East Main Street, reported a vandal threw a brick at his vehicle and caused damage.

> Police responded to an alarm at D&R Sporting Goods, 620 Fairchild Street, where a brick was thrown through a glass entrance door, but it was unknown whether merchandise was stolen.

Nanticoke man charged with criminal trespass, stalking

A 36-year-old man was charged with criminal trespass and stalking Sunday after his ex-girlfriend discovered he had broken into her apartment, city police said.

At around 1 a.m., Jamie Todd Lohman of 209 W. South St. broke in for a second time in less than 10 days into Cecilia Moore's apartment, located at 110 Front St., police said.

Moore arrived home to find someone had forcibly entered her home and found Lohman inside as he was exiting her bedroom, according to a police affidavit.

Upon arrival, police found pry marks around the edge of the door, and Moore told them Lohman did not have a key, according to the affidavit.

On July 10, police had visited the apartment after she reported Lohman had entered her apartment.

In that incident, Jamie Todd Lohman told officers Lohman "attempted to come on to her" and tugged on her clothing "in an attempt for her to have sex with him," according to the affidavit.

Lohman was arraigned Sunday before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

7/20/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- Eileen Kemmerer, of East Broad Street, was cited with retail theft for allegedly taking Neosporin from Weis Market.
- Angela Seiger, of Honey Pot Street, reported someone stole two wicker patio chairs from her residence.
- Donald Sullivan, of West Main Street, reported someone damaged his vehicle while it was parked in his driveway.
- John Legins, of Pine Street, reported a .32-caliber pistol was stolen from his vehicle.
- Ann Jaskulski, of East Church Street, reported 25 lawn ornaments were stolen from her front yard.

7/10/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- A 16-year-old boy was cited with retail theft for allegedly stealing a cigar from Ruminski's Market.
- David Rushnock, of East Main Street, reported a satellite radio, money and various papers were stolen from his vehicle.
- Jennifer Sczyrck, of Park Street, reported someone entered her residence and stole three video game systems, video games, a television and a pistol.
- Dean Gavrish, of Coal Street, reported someone slashed two tires on his vehicle.
- Audrey Hummel, of Line Street, reported someone stole her grandson's 20-inch bicycle.
- A 10-year-old boy reported someone stole his 20-inch bicycle from Weis Markets.
- Thomas Brewer, 23, of East Washington Street, was cited with disorderly conduct and public drunkenness, and a 16-year-old girl was cited with underage drinking and violating curfew after police investigated a man causing a disturbance in the 100 block of East Ridge Street.
- Brenda Bartlett of East Church Street reported someone poured paint on her vehicle.

7/3/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- Andrew Smulligan, of South Hanover Street, was cited with harassment for allegedly leaving threatening messages on his girlfriend's mother's voicemail.
- Robert Mitchell, of East Main Street, reported a television, a recliner, a couch and two glass tables were stolen during a burglary at his residence.
- A 17-year-old male was cited with underage drinking and disorderly conduct after a disturbance.
- Joan Girlock, of West Noble Street, reported someone stole a battery from her camper.
- Joseph Bushelli, of Nanticoke Avenue, reported someone smashed a window on his vehicle and stole prescription medications.
- Sean Owens, 22, of Ashley, was cited with harassment after he allegedly called an ex-girlfriend more than 71 times a day for eight days.
- A 17-year-old male was cited with harassment after he allegedly choked a 15-year-old male in a dispute about a fort in the woods.
- Sylvia Sherlinski, of Wilkes-Barre, reported copper pipe was stolen from a home on South Hanover Street.
- Linda Sarnak, of Apollo Circle, reported someone attempted to enter her residence through a kitchen window.
- Tiffany Shiffka-Dunn, of Hanover Township, was cited with harassment after she allegedly threatened a relative and a woman.
- Dennis Dominic Ventura, 29, of West Grand Street, Nanticoke, was charged with possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and public drunkenness after he was found carrying a pipe during a disturbance outside his residence on June 26. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker.

7/1/2010

South Korean arrested on sex charges

elewis@timesleader.com

A South Korean national was arrested by police on charges he sexually assaulted a woman inside a store on South Market Street.

click image to enlarge

Ui Sok Chae, 59, was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on Thursday on two counts each of aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and indecent exposure. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

Chae is in the United States visiting his son, who is a student at Penn State University, according to charges filed.

Police allege Chae sexually assaulted a woman inside the Thrift Store, and followed her outside where he continued to molest her on Wednesday.

The woman told police she was walking near the store and asked a man if she could use his cell phone. He told her to go inside the store where he kissed her, and exposed himself, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said in the criminal complaint that the woman's mother went to the store and found Chae exposing himself behind the counter with a female customer inside the business.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on July 6 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

7/1/2010

A woman accused by police of drunken driving waived her right to a preliminary hearing Tuesday before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

Times Leader

Gerardette Ann Kasprzyk, 52, of Hunlock Township, waived two counts of driving under the influence to Luzerne County Court. Police withdrew three traffic violations against Kasprzyk.

Kasprzyk was charged on evidence of drunken driving after a traffic stop on Lower Broadway on March 27, according to the criminal complaint.

6/30/2010

Former soldier gets house arrest for drug charges

John Chernowsky, 25, of Nanticoke, has completed an inpatient addiction program.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A former soldier, injured while serving in Afghanistan and charged with making up a robbery story to obtain a police report he needed to get a new prescription from a doctor, was sentenced Tuesday to six to 12 months house arrest.

John Chernowsky, 25, of South Walnut Street, Nanticoke, was sentenced in five different cases by Judge David Lupas. Chernowsky was sentenced on charges of delivery of heroin, possession of drug paraphernalia, false reports made to police and driving under the influence.

Chernowsky's attorney, Michael Pendolphi, said his client was injured in a Humvee crash while serving in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan.

Pendolphi said Chernowsky was discharged and developed post-traumatic stress disorder. He became addicted to pain medication prescribed to him by a doctor, his attorney said.

Pendolphi said that since Chernowsky was arrested, he has participated in an inpatient drug addiction program, which he successfully completed.

He is now receiving outpatient care.

"To put this man in prison is preposterous," Pendolphi said.

Assistant District Attorney Albert Yacoub recommended Chernowsky receive some sort of prison sentence because two of the charges are felonies.

According to court papers, on Nov. 23 Chernowsky reported he was robbed at knifepoint of money and his prescription bottle of Xanax tablets.

Chernowsky told police he could not contact an officer when he banged on the door at the police department, but a surveillance video from the department did not show Chernowsky at the door.

Police said Chernowsky later admitted he fabricated the story to obtain more pills.

In another incident, Chernowsky was charged after police said he climbed onto the rear roof of an elderly neighbor's house on East Church Street, claiming he was looking for a shirt his friend had thrown out of the window on Nov. 24.

Police said they did not find a shirt on the roof, and that Chernowsky later admitted he wanted to get into the house to look for money and that he had a \$800-to-\$1,000-a-month heroin habit.

On Nov. 25, police said, a vehicle Chernowsky was driving struck another vehicle in Nanticoke. Police said Chernowsky was unsteady on his feet and had bloodshot, glossy eyes.

Five days later, police observed Chernowsky on West Main Street, Nanticoke, where they found him in possession of a hypodermic needle.

In August, police said, Chernowsky sold suspected heroin to a police informant.

6/19/2010

City police reported the following:

Times Leader

- David Kozak, of West Noble Street, was cited with disorderly conduct after police allegedly saw him throw an explosive device out a car window.
- Modern Gas, of West Main Street, reported copper pipe was stolen from a vehicle.
- Jason Racht, of Kosciuszko Street, was cited with public drunkenness when he was allegedly found intoxicated exiting the Uni Mart, Main Street.
- Ronald Baker, of West Green Street, reported someone slashed two tires on his vehicle.
- Andrew Gibson Jr., of South Walnut Street, was cited with public drunkenness when he was allegedly found intoxicated in the area of Shea and State streets.
- A 15-year old male reported an orange Mongoose Hoopd bicycle was stolen from a porch of a West Ridge Street home.
- Kathleen Levandowski, of Apollo Circle, was cited with trespassing when she failed to obey commands to stay out of Rite Aid Pharmacy, Main Street.
- Kara Young, of East Green Street, was cited for trespassing when she refused to leave a home on East Grand Street.

6/16/2010

Nanticoke police activity

Citizens Voice

- > Susan Sanders of River Street was cited for violation of the dog law ordinance after her unleashed dog bit a Wyoming Valley Sanitation Authority employee on the hip.
- > Carolyn Keene reported someone stole copper piping from a vacant rental property she owns on State Street.
- > Someone entered the property of Modern Gas and stole a GPS unit, tools and a large amount of brass fittings and copper tubing.
- > Mike Tomko of East Green Street reported someone damaged the front marker light on his vehicle.
- > A 16-year-old was cited for operating an unregistered and uninsured all terrain vehicle on the 100 block of East Washington Street.
- > Phillip Levandowski Sr., of Mountain View Drive, reported someone entered his garage and stole a case of beer and a key to an all terrain vehicle.
- > Someone broke into the Quoit Club on Railroad Street and stole cash from a safe and a "joker poker" machine.
- > A front window was broken at the DelBalso Ford property on West Main Street.
- > Janet Baker of East Grand Street reported someone entered her garage and stole a GPS unit.
- > Ace Schrader of 203 Apollo Circle was cited for disorderly conduct after kicking the passenger side door of a 17-year-old female's vehicle.
- > David Eisenbach, of West South Street, reported someone threw a rock at the side of apartment, causing damage.
- > Keith Keller, of John Street, reported someone stole his Suzuki motorcycle while it was parked on East Ridge Street.

5/27/2010

Citizens Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

- > Carole Keber reported Wednesday that someone stole a Cupid statue and a pedestal from the front yard of her East Field Street apartment.
- > Diseree Deitz, of West Church Street, reported Wednesday that someone entered her vehicle and stole a TomTom GPS, a Samsung cellular phone, an RCA portable CD player and a JVC portable DVD player.

- > Frank Haydock, of West Grove Street, reported Wednesday that his driver-side window was smashed and paint was damaged on his car after someone threw a piece of asphalt at his vehicle.
- > William Thomas, of West Pittston, was cited Wednesday for public drunkenness after police found him lying on the sidewalk of the Nanticoke bridge.
- > Stanley Cardinale, of Loomis Street, reported Wednesday that someone smashed the windshield of his vehicle with a rock.
- > William Cupp, of West Green Street, was cited Wednesday for harassment after he threatened physical harm to Loretta Fenner and Craig Harness.
- > Andrew Gibson, of South Walnut Street, was cited Wednesday for public drunkenness after officers found him sitting on a sidewalk leaning against a building at Spring and Prospect streets.
- > Andrew Smulligan, of South Hanover Street, reported Wednesday someone damaged the bottom of his screen door.
- > Martha Eckwrote, of East Main Street, reported Wednesday that someone stole a metal and wooden bench from a property on Coal Street.
- > Edmond Smith, of Plymouth, reported Wednesday that someone smashed the passenger and rear window and dented the rear tail gate of his Ford Bronco while it was parked in Apollo Circle.
- > Multiple people reported Tuesday that there were 11 vehicles that had flattened tires in the 400, 500 and 600 blocks of Main Street.
- > Lori Antolik, of East Noble Street, reported Tuesday that someone stole the license plate from her husband's motorcycle.
- > Chelsey Mascolo, of East Green Street, reported Tuesday that someone damaged her vehicle after jumping on the hood of her car.
- > Michelle Morgis, of Oak Street, reported Tuesday that someone entered her vehicle and stole three \$1 bills and a Jensen CD car stereo.
- > William Daniel Atkinson, 21, of 15 E. Ridge St., was charged Tuesday with burglary, criminal trespass, theft and receiving stolen property after stealing and selling his neighbor's yellow walk-behind lawn mower, according to police documents. Atkinson loaded the lawn mower in his black Mercury Sable and sold it for \$40 to his cousin, David Atkinson, four or five days before he was arrested.

5/27/2010

A local chiropractor was sentenced Wednesday to four years probation on charges he filed fraudulent claims for insurance, collecting more than \$83,000.

Times Leader

Gary Peter McGee, 124 Christian Street, Nanticoke, was sentenced by Luzerne County Court Judge David Lupas on charges of insurance fraud.

Lupas also gave McGee 200 hours of community service to be served at local medical clinics.

McGee, 42, who has an office at 1144 Wyoming Avenue, Forty Fort, was charged after he allegedly submitted 212 fraudulent claims to Blue Cross for treatments he claimed another chiropractor performed on him.

McGee allegedly submitted the claims by rubber stamping a second doctor's signature onto claim forms that were submitted for reimbursement. He was charged in September last year.

McGee pleaded guilty to the charge in April.

5/27/2010

A man was arraigned on Wednesday on charges he stole a lawn mower during a burglary.

Times Leader

William Daniel Atkinson, 20, of East Ridge Street, Nanticoke, was charged with three counts of criminal trespass, two counts each of burglary and theft and a single count of receiving stolen property. He was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Police allege Atkinson stole a lawn mower from a garage on East Ridge Street. He sold the lawn mower for \$40.

Atkinson returned to the garage intending to steal a bag of aluminum cans when he was spotted by two people, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for June 1 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

5/22/2010

Nanticoke man sentenced in drug, kidnapping cases

With credit for time served, Norman W. Mayewski ends up with parole and probation.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Friday to 2 to 5 years in jail on 10 charges, including those linked to a kidnapping case from November 2007.

But Luzerne County Judge Thomas Burke gave Norman W. Mayewski, 25, of West Main Street, 907 days credit for time already served and granted him immediate parole. Burke said Mayewski must serve a 12-month probation period for his crimes.

The judge said he gave Mayewski a lesser sentence because Mayewski has shown he wants to turn his life around. "I wish I was able to go back and change it," Mayewski said of his crimes. "The only thing I can change is myself." Mayewski's parents, Norman S. Mayewski, 51, and Sandra Mayewski, 48, both of Coal Street, Nanticoke, also appeared before Burke to be sentenced on one count each of possession of a controlled substance, but their sentencings were continued to September.

Those charges stem from a January 2009 incident in which police say they pulled over a vehicle driven by Sandra Mayewski in which they found several bags of suspected heroin stamped "Money Train." Norman S. Mayewski was a passenger in the vehicle.

Norman W. Mayewski, who faced 98 years in jail had his sentences run consecutively, pleaded guilty in March. He was represented by attorney Demetrius Fannick, while Deputy District Attorney David Pedri prosecuted.

"He's not the same person that he was," Fannick said Friday, adding that Mayewski has taken responsibility for his actions.

In the 2007 kidnapping case, police said Dominique Caranante reported she had been assaulted in a dispute about a new boyfriend. Police said Caranante met Mayewski in an alley after he threatened her about a new boyfriend.

The woman said Mayewski forced her into his vehicle and drove to Interstate 81, where he threatened to jump off a bridge into traffic. Mayewski then took her to his residence, but she ran out of the house to a nearby friend's place.

In the unrelated drug cases, police said Mayewski packaged pills, identified as Klonopin and Percocet, on Nov. 26, 2007. On June 6, 2007, Mayewski sold suspected heroin and crack cocaine to a police informant, as well as on three other occasions, in April, August and October of 2007, police said.

Also in October 2007, police pulled over a vehicle driven by Mayewski in which they found \$1,273 in cash and suspected crack cocaine.

Police said they also found a digital scale, a computer with video cameras taping the outside of the house, a police scanner, a bag of unidentified white liquid and two boxes of sandwich bags at Mayewski's residence.

5/21/2010

Self-proclaimed skin head charged with threatening physician, nurse

elewis@timesleader.com

A self-proclaimed skin head with Nazi tattoos was charged by Newport Township police on Friday for allegedly threatening to harm a physician of Asian descent and a nurse in April.

click image to enlarge

Darl R. Musselman, 18, of Pine Street, Nanticoke, was charged with aggravated assault, disorderly conduct and harassment. He was arraigned by District Judge Michael Dotzel in Wilkes-Barre Township and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Audrey Williams contacted police when her son, Musselman, was causing a disturbance at her residence on April 9. Musselman told police he ingested pills and planned on swallowing more pills.

When told he was going to be committed to a hospital on a mental health issue, Musselman fled the home.

Police chased Musselman for several blocks before he was captured. He was transported to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital where police allege he threatened an Asian physician and attempted to bite a thumb on a nurse, the criminal complaint says.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Musselman is a self-proclaimed skin head and has Nazi tattoos on his body.

5/19/2010

Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke City police responded to the following thefts on Monday:

- > Genny Lauritzen said someone entered her Kosciuszko Street home and stole a Wii game system.
- > John Tagnani said someone entered his Agostina Drive home and removed cash.
- > Donald Lyons of Honey Pot Street said someone stole the license plate from his Plymouth Neon.
- > Gordon Storms said someone stole the copper piping from the vacant side of the East Ridge Street duplex he lives in.
- > Sandra Fedorchak of West Grand Street said someone stole various lawn ornaments from her yard, including a 3-foot-high statue of a bear with a shovel and a couple sitting on a bench.
- > Linda Plews of West Field Street said someone stole a hanging potted plant from her back porch.
- > Beverly Thomas of East Noble Street said someone removed four solar lights from her front yard.

5/12/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Windows were smashed on a vehicle and at a house on South Walnut Street.
- A student at Luzerne County Community College reported a Bichon dog was stolen from a vehicle that was parked on the campus.
- Antoinette Lewis, of Luzerne, was cited with harassment after Henry Steuer, of Nanticoke, her ex-boyfriend, reported she had been communicating with him.
- Wayne Maxwell, of Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness after he was found intoxicated in a vehicle after leaving a bar.
- Alfred Gregor Jr., of West Wyoming, reported someone scratched his vehicle that was parked on Hill Street.
- Someone burglarized Stegura's Funeral Home, South Hanover Street. No items were reported missing.
- Someone shot pink paintballs at Mike's Service Station, Lower Broadway.
- A woman reported her purse was stolen while she was waiting for a bus at East Main and Shea streets. The suspect is described as a man in his early to mid 20s, approximately 5 feet, 10 inches tall, thin build, short brown hair, and wearing a brown/green T-shirt and blue jeans.

4/28/2010

Times Leader

A man charged by police on evidence of drunken driving waived his right Tuesday to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

Ronald Raymond Jones, 48, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, waived with two counts of driving under the influence to Luzerne County Court.

Police alleged Jones crashed a vehicle into a utility pole on East Main Street on March 13.

Jones had a blood alcohol level of .219 percent, according to the criminal complaint.

An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered legally intoxicated with a BAC of .08 percent.

Police withdrew two counts of providing false reports to law enforcement against Roger Allen Sadowski Jr., 39, of Nanticoke, on Tuesday during a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

Police had accused Sadowski of filing a false report about damage to his vehicle on March 31, according to the criminal complaint.

A man accused of assaulting a woman waived his right to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Tuesday.

Jared L. Allabaugh, 23, of West Ridge Street, Nanticoke, waived two counts of simple assault and disorderly conduct, and one count each of criminal mischief, harassment and public drunkenness to Luzerne County Court.

Police allege Allabaugh assaulted a woman outside a bar on East Ridge Street and damaged a window in a cruiser on April 23.

4/27/2010

Times Leader

Police arrested Jared L. Allabaugh, 23, of West Ridge Street, on charges he assaulted a woman and damaged a cruiser Friday night.

Allabaugh was charged with two counts each of simple assault and disorderly conduct, and one count each of criminal mischief, harassment and public drunkenness. He was arraigned by Senior District Judge Andrew Barilla and released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Police allege Allabaugh assaulted a woman outside a bar on East Ridge Street and damaged a window in a cruiser at about 10:15 p.m. Friday.

4/24/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

Jose Calo, 45, of 131 Pine St., was charged with simple assault and harassment for allegedly assaulting his girlfriend, Ania Dunaj, giving her a black eye.

Rita Legins of Oak Street reported someone threw eggs at her house and tossed creamed corn on her vehicle.

Gale Lewis of Century 21 reported someone broke into a property on East Ridge Street to steal copper piping and shot out a window with a pellet gun.

4/15/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Police said Jamil Tucker, of Apollo Circle, was cited with public drunkenness and criminal mischief after a disturbance involving a broken window at an Apollo Circle residence on Friday. Tucker's girlfriend, Kayla Claypool, 19, of Apollo Circle, was cited with providing false reports to law enforcement for allegedly claiming she broke the window.
- Gordon Storms, of East Ridge Street, reported someone smashed windows on her vehicle.
- A 16-year-old male reported a blue Redline Single-X 20-inch bicycle was stolen from a home on Park Street.

4/13/2010

**Cops: Woman pretends to be doctor
Nanticoke resident charged with trying to get painkillers illegally.**

elewis@timesleader.com

A woman was arrested by township police on charges she pretended to be a physician when she ordered painkillers from a pharmacy on Saturday.

Police allege Patricia Susan Bolka, 35, of East Union Street, Nanticoke, called the pharmacy inside Gerrity's Supermarket, Hanover Mall, and left a voice mail identifying herself as a physician to order prescriptions for herself and another woman.

Bolka was arrested by police when she showed up at the pharmacy to pick up the painkillers.

It wasn't the first time Bolka used the name of a physician to order prescriptions by telephone, according to charges filed.

Kingston police allege Bolka called Cook's Pharmacy and identified herself as a physician to order prescriptions for her and Silvana Medina, 44, of Nanticoke, in September.

Bolka was arraigned by District Judge Joseph Halesy in Hanover Township on three counts of possession of a controlled substance and two counts of identify theft that were filed by township police. She was charged by Kingston police with criminal conspiracy to acquire a controlled substance by misrepresentation and criminal attempt to acquire a controlled substance by misrepresentation.

Bolka was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 total bail.

Medina is facing the same charges by Kingston police; however, she has not been arraigned, according to court records. According to the criminal complaint filed by township police, a pharmacist at Gerrity's became suspicious about a message on an answering machine from a physician ordering 90 tablets of Ultrams for Bolka and 90 tablets of Vicodin

for Medina. The pharmacist said the voice on the machine and the voice of the actual physician, which the pharmacist knew, were not the same.

The physician told the pharmacist that he did not call in prescriptions for the two women.

Police arrested Bolka when she showed up at the pharmacy. Bolka told police she has a problem and needs help, the criminal complaint says.

Kingston police allege in the criminal complaint that Bolka called Cook's Pharmacy on Sept. 29, identified herself as a physician and ordered 60 tablets of Alprazolam and 60 tablets of Percocet for Medina on an answering machine.

4/6/2010

Home burglary under investigation in Nanticoke

Times Leader

A home in the 200 block of East Main Street was burglarized as the tenants slept overnight, police said. Police said the tenants were sleeping on the second floor when the first floor was ransacked. A stereo and stereo equipment from the victims vehicle, which was parked on East Spring Street, were stolen, police said. Anyone with information about the burglary and theft from the vehicle is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

4/6/2010

Nanticoke police investigate graffiti vandalism

Times Leader

Police said they are investigating at least 17 incidents involving graffiti on garages, homes and vehicles. Police said red and blue color spray paint was used on the buildings and vehicles on Church, Grand, Walnut and College streets. Anyone with information about the graffiti is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

4/2/2010

A woman was charged by police on Thursday for allegedly assaulting a man.

Times Leader

Heather Conway, 31, of West Church Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault and harassment. She was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court and released on \$5,000 unsecured bail. Police said Conway assaulted Roger Sadowski in their residence at about 3:20 a.m. Thursday, according to the criminal complaint. Police said that Sadowski had injuries to his face, neck and leg. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on April 13 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

4/1/2010

Nanticoke man charged in fake drug prescription case

elewis@timesleader.com

A man used a home computer to create bogus prescriptions he filled at three pharmacies using false names, including the name of a deceased relative, according to charges filed by the state.

Marc J. Zawadzki, 36, of Center Street, Nanticoke, was charged by the state Office of Attorney General's Bureau of Narcotics Investigation and Drug Control with 25 counts of possession of a controlled substance by misrepresentation and 23 counts of possession of a controlled substance. He was arraigned Tuesday by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and released on \$25,000 unsecured bail.

Narcotics agents alleged Zawadzki produced prescriptions on a home computer, forging names of three physicians, and had the prescriptions filled at two pharmacies in Nanticoke and a department store pharmacy in Edwardsville from November to February.

According to the criminal complaint:

A pharmacist at Kmart, Route 11, Edwardsville, contacted the Attorney General's Office in January claiming the same person was picking up prescriptions for five people written by three different physicians. Surveillance cameras captured Zawadzki picking up the prescriptions and driving away.

Narcotics agents learned the names of four people for whom the prescriptions were written were false.

A Plains Township physician, whose name appears on the fraudulent prescriptions, told narcotics agents Zawadzki was

a patient but he had not treated him for several years. Narcotics agents were told by a pharmacist at Spotanski's Pharmacy, South Prospect Street, Nanticoke, in February that Zawadzki passed 17 fraudulent prescriptions using four names and three physicians.

Zawadzki contacted the Attorney General's Office on March 3, claiming he created the prescriptions on a home computer and purchased "better grade of paper" at a store to produce them. He told narcotic agents he practiced writing narcotic symbols he obtained from the Internet, made up names and used the name of a deceased uncle on the fraudulent prescriptions.

Narcotic agents alleged Zawadzki also passed bogus prescriptions at the CVS Pharmacy, East Main Street, Nanticoke. Controlled substances that Zawadzki obtained were Percocet, oxycondone, hydrocodone and Xanax.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 20 before Whittaker.

4/1/2010

Man jailed for manslaughter gets more time

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man recently sentenced for causing the death of another man in a fight received an additional one to two years in prison on unrelated drug charges.

Zireek Gardner, 19, of East Main Street, who was sentenced in November on involuntary manslaughter charges and sentenced to four to eight years in prison for the death of William Bentley, received the additional sentence Wednesday on two counts of delivery of heroin and possession with intent to deliver.

The one-to-two-year sentence was handed down by Luzerne County Judge David Lupas, who said the sentence will run consecutively with the involuntary manslaughter sentence Gardner is currently serving.

In the drug case, police said Gardner sold suspected heroin to a police informant on several separate occasions in October.

Gardner was sentenced last year on charges he caused the death of 25-year-old Bentley. Prosecutors said Gardner and Bentley got into a fight on March 26 outside Schiel's Family Market on Hanover Street in Wilkes-Barre.

|Gardner punched Bentley in the back of the head. Bentley never regained consciousness and died the next day after doctors said he was brain-dead.

Police said the fight was the end result of an earlier incident in which Gardner, also known as "Zock," said he was robbed of drugs and money.

The two met by chance outside the grocery store later that day, prosecutors said.

Gardner was represented by attorney John Pike. Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts prosecuted the case.

3/24/2010

Police issue citations for illegal dumping

Citizens Voice

NEWPORT TWP. - Township police on March 17 cited four people who were caught scattering garbage and burning it in the area on Industrial Park Road in Ridgeview, commonly known as the Sandpit, police said.

Those cited include: Earl Lohman, 22, Nanticoke, Michael Swicklik, 20, Mountain Top, Joshua Lohman, 19, Nanticoke, and Cameron Cox, 21, Nanticoke.

Police said the suspect scattered wooden pallets, pieces of exercise equipment, a mattress, bags of household trash and a used tire over a fire. The offenders were observed by police throwing the items on the fire, police said.

Nanticoke man cited for discarding trash illegally

Police cited a Nanticoke man with illegal dumping Friday around 12:15 p.m. on Industrial Park Road in the Ridgeview section of the township, police said.

Police cited Martin M. Lewis, 54, with scattering rubbish and trespass by motor vehicle for driving a Jeep Cherokee with a trailer filled with household garbage back to the area commonly known as the Sandpit, dumping the items.

Items dumped include bags and boxes filled with miscellaneous household garbage, old mini blinds, plastic wheel covers, pizza boxes, a broken Bissell Steam Vacuum and a broken projection television.

Thomas Gregorowicz of East State Street reported someone gained entry to his vehicle and stole two CD wallets

containing 40 to 50 CDs.

Jennifer Park, of Apollo Circle, reported someone damaged her backyard shed.

Michael Coffee, of Hill Street, reported someone smashed out the window of his vehicle and stole a flip out television, a flip down television, two amplifiers and a K scale.

Mary Bolinski, of West Union Street, reported someone flattened the tires of three of her vehicles.

Albert Brown, of West Grand Street, reported someone scratched two of his vehicles.

Randy Kashnicki, of East Church Street, reported someone knocked over the top layer of stone from his retailing wall.

Duane Krommes, of East Broad Street, reported someone damaged a piece of siding on his home.

Police responded to a domestic dispute on West Union Street and encountered Rafael Munoz, 36, of Plymouth, who police determined was wanted by Philadelphia police.

Police arrested Shamel Harris, 26, of Brooklyn, N.Y., after police responded to a disturbance at 380 E. Ridge St. and he refused to cooperate. Police said Harris provided multiple fake names, and the FBI processing center eventually identified him through fingerprints. He was charged with providing false information to law enforcement.

3/24/2010

Plymouth Township man charged with stalking ex-girlfriend, fleeing police

elewis@timesleader.com

Police filed stalking and related charges against a Plymouth Township man accused of harassing an ex-girlfriend and initiating a pursuit with officers early Tuesday morning.

Police allege Robert Richard Bond Jr., 19, of Bradley Street, was throwing rocks at a window of a residence where his ex-girlfriend resides at about 2:45 a.m. Tuesday. Police spotted Bond driving a vehicle in the area of East Main and Kosciuszko streets around 3:30 a.m.

Bond refused to stop and initiated a pursuit with police on the Sans Souci Parkway and the South Cross Valley Expressway into Plymouth Township, police said.

Police said Bond crashed his vehicle into an embankment on state Route 11, and ran into the Plymouth flats area where he eluded capture.

A police canine was used to track Bond in the secluded area but police believe Bond was provided a ride.

Bond is facing six counts of harassment, three counts of stalking, and one count each of loitering and prowling at night, reckless endangerment, fleeing or eluding police, reckless driving, speeding and failure to keep vehicle on roadway. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Tuesday.

Police said Bond has contacted family members.

3/18/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- Mary Bolinski, of West Union Street, reported someone flattened tires on three vehicles.
- Albert Brown, of West Grand Street, reported someone vandalized two vehicles.
- Randy Kashnicki, of East Church Street, reported someone knocked over a retaining wall in the rear of his residence.
- Duane Krommes, of East Broad Street, reported someone damaged the exterior of his residence.

3/18/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

• Ronald Raymond Jones, 48, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of driving under the influence after he allegedly crashed a vehicle into a utility pole on East Main Street on Saturday, police said. Police said Jones had a blood alcohol level of .219 percent. An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered legally intoxicated with a BAC of .08 percent.

The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Tuesday and mailed to Jones. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on April 27 before Whittaker.

- Jeffrey J. Gruver, 26, of Dallas Mobile Park, Dallas, was charged on allegations he threatened a woman with a pellet

gun on West Green Street on March 10.

Gruver was charged with terroristic threats, simple assault, disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and mailed to Gruver.

According to the criminal complaint, Gruver approached a woman walking a dog on West Green Street and began a conversation. The woman said Gruver followed her to her home and asked for a glass of water. She said that when she refused, Gruver aimed a gun at her.

Gruver ran away and was captured by officers after a chase. A pellet gun was found near Locust Street.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on April 27 before Whittaker.

3/17/2010

Guilty plea could mean long haul in Pa. prison

Norman Mayewski, of Nanticoke, pleads guilty to 10 charges, including kidnapping, drug-related counts.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

Assistant District Attorney Albert Yacoub said he'll be asking the judge for a state prison sentence of three to six years when Mayewski is sentenced.

A Nanticoke man pleaded guilty Tuesday to 10 charges relating to seven separate cases, including a kidnapping charge from November 2007.

Norman Mayewski, 25, of West Main Street, entered the plea before Luzerne County President Judge Thomas Burke. Mayewski, who faces 98 years in jail if his sentences are run consecutively on all 10 charges, pleaded guilty to two counts of manufacturing a controlled substance, five counts of delivery of a controlled substance, one count of possession with intent to deliver, one count of kidnapping and one count of possession of a controlled substance. Mayewski was represented by attorney Demetrius Fannick, while Assistant District Attorney Albert Yacoub prosecuted. Yacoub said he'll be asking the judge for a state prison sentence of three to six years when Mayewski is sentenced on April 28.

In the 2007 kidnapping case, police said Dominique Caranante reported she had been assaulted.

Police said Caranante met Mayewski in an alley after he threatened her about a new boyfriend. She said Mayewski asked her to go for a ride with him, but when she said no, he pulled her hair and kicked her in the stomach.

Caranante said Mayewski forced her into his vehicle and drove to Interstate 81, where he threatened to jump off a bridge into traffic. Mayewski then took the woman to his residence, but she ran out of the house to a nearby friend's home.

In the unrelated drug cases, police said Mayewski packaged pills, identified as klonopin and Percocet, on Nov. 26, 2007.

On June 6, 2007, Mayewski sold suspected heroin and crack cocaine to a police informant, as well as on three other occasions, in April, August and October of 2007, police said.

Also in October 2007, police pulled over a vehicle driven by Mayewski in which they found \$1,273 in cash and suspected crack cocaine.

Police said that when they searched Mayewski's residence, they found a digital scale, a computer with video cameras taping the outside of the home, a police scanner, a bag of unidentified white liquid and two boxes of sandwich bags.

3/12/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police released information on the following incidents:

Ryan Zendarski of East Main Street said someone smashed two windows on his vehicle while it was parked near his home.

Barbara Garren of College Street reported someone smashed a hole in the rear window of her vehicle.

Adam Zwolinski of West Church Street reported someone damaged the rear quarter panel of his vehicle.

Raymond Drexler of Front Street said someone entered his vehicle and stole an iPod, a GPS unit and CDs.

Angel Halchak of Coal Street reported someone slashed two tires on her vehicle while it was parked at her residence.

Leonard Domzalski of South Hanover Street reported someone threw a dozen eggs at his home.

James Wright Jr. of West Grand Street was cited for harassment after an altercation with his sister's boyfriend.

Scott Alfonso of Center Street was cited for public drunkenness after police were dispatched to a male threatening a caller.

3/11/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

- A man was charged after a parking dispute involving his girlfriend.

John J. Balut, 41, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, is charged with accidents involving damage to vehicle, criminal mischief, false reports to law enforcement, disorderly conduct and three traffic violations. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Tuesday and mailed to Balut.

- Police charged two people after helping them with a vehicle that was stuck in snow on Middle Road on March 4. Thang Duc Nguyen, 19, of South Hancock Street, Wilkes-Barre, and Asia Marie Cobb, 21, of Park Avenue and South Empire Street, Wilkes-Barre, were charged with disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. Nguyen was further charged with obstructing justice, possession of alcohol by minor and careless driving, and Cobb with resisting arrest. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and mailed to Nguyen and Cobb.

- Two men were charged on allegations they assaulted each other during a road rage dispute on March 2. Brett Michael Williamson, 18, of East Washington Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault, harassment and disorderly conduct. Christopher Michael Shon, 37, of Honey Pot Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of simple assault, and one count each of harassment, disorderly conduct and driving with a suspended license. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and mailed to Williamson and Shon.

2/28/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the recent following:

- Meichin Huang, of Mountain Top, reported someone stole the registration plate from her vehicle while it was parked at Nanticoke Special Care Hospital.

- Erin Gutkowski, of East Noble Street, reported someone threw a brick through a window at her residence.

- Priscilla Mazur, of Nanticoke, reported a woman stole her purse while she was walking on East Main Street.

- Robert M. McCue, 72, of Kelfield Drive, Nanticoke, was arrested on evidence of drunken driving after a crash on West Washington Street on Saturday.

McCue was charged with two counts of driving under the influence and a single count of careless driving. The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and mailed to McCue on Thursday.

Police allege McCue had a blood alcohol content of .295 percent after he struck a parked vehicle.

An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered intoxicated with a BAC of .08 percent.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for March 16 before Whittaker.

2/26/2010

Two people have been charged with harassing and threatening a couple that was traveling through the city with their child.

Citizens Voice

Catherine Oshinski, 21, and Ryan Briggs, 22, both of 1129 S. Prospect St., are charged with disorderly conduct.

Oshinski was also charged with harassment.

Police say on Feb. 18 they approached a couple that was stopped at a stop sign, yelling "you are a snitch" and "scum" to Eric Karvaski and girlfriend, Robin Buckley, while they were with their 2-year-old daughter. Oshinski then spit on Karvaski, police said.

2/26/2010

City police have arrested a man on aggravated assault and robbery charges for slashing a man in the face and stealing \$45 from his pocket on Jan. 1 at 253 Apollo Circle, police said.

Citizens Voice

Karsheen J. McNeil, last known address of 62 Third St., Larksville, is charged with aggravated assault, robbery, theft, simple assault and recklessly endangering another person.

According to arrest papers:

McNeil, a convicted drug dealer, assaulted, slashed and robbed Theodore Glowacki Jr. around 7 a.m. on Jan. 1 after accusing him of stealing a woman's purse containing money. Trista Sims, occupant of 253 Apollo Circle, had owed money to McNeil, a man she met months ago at the Prospect Street Cafe in Nanticoke.

Glowacki and Sims previously told McNeil that another man stole the purse, but McNeil believed Glowacki was involved. Glowacki said McNeil slashed him across the neck and face with a blade and then punched him several times in the face.

McNeil then fled into a waiting Lexus, which was occupied by two other men. Wilkes-Barre police detectives later helped identify McNeil.

2/24/2010

Man wanted on bad checks

Times Leader

State police at Hazleton said they are searching for Albert Patrick Huff, 42, on charges he passed nearly \$7,000 in checks at three businesses on a closed checking account.

Police allege Huff wrote checks to Murphy Lumber Company, state Route 437, Dennison Township, Shelly's Lumber, state Route 940, Foster Township, and Conyngham Builders, state Route 93, Sugarloaf Township, from Dec. 30 to Jan. 5.

Police said the bad checks totaled \$6,959.78.

Huff purchased large amounts of copper pipe that has a high scrap value, police said.

Police said Huff has operated under the business name of "AK Construction," and has ties to Hazleton and **Nanticoke**. Huff is charged with eight counts of bad checks and three counts of theft, which were filed with district judges Daniel O'Donnell and Gerald Feissner.

Huff is also wanted by the Luzerne County Sheriff's Department on a warrant for failing to appear at a court hearing on Jan. 25, according to court records.

2/21/2010

A man who said that two men stabbed him allegedly used another person's identity at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, police said.

See Below - From Times Leader

James Michael Hughes, 21, last known address as State Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned Thursday on charges of identity theft and providing false identification to law enforcement. He was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Hughes arrived at the hospital on Jan. 24 saying he was stabbed by two men on Hazle Avenue, Wilkes-Barre. Hughes identified himself at the hospital as 25-year-old Thomas Segeda.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Hughes provided vague information about the stabbing and identified himself to officers as Segeda.

Published reports of the stabbing prompted a response from Thomas Segeda, who contacted police on Jan. 25. He told police that his wallet with his driver's license was either lost or stolen, and he had received phone calls from friends about the stabbing.

Segeda said there were other reports that his identity had been used without his knowledge.

Police obtained video recordings from the hospital that showed Hughes, not Segeda, walking into the emergency room, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 25 in Wilkes-Barre Central Court.

2/10/2010

Citizens' Voice

Police seek Nanticoke man accused of identity theft, racking up medical bills - APPREHENDED



Wilkes-Barre police have filed an arrest warrant against a man who was stabbed, then gave police and medical officials the wrong identity.

James M. Hughes Jr., 21, of Nanticoke, is charged with identity theft and providing false information to law enforcement.

After being taken to the hospital, Hughes allegedly told authorities he was Thomas Segeda, 25.

When the story was reported in local newspapers, the real Segeda approached police, saying his driver's license was stolen several months earlier and someone was using his identity.

After reviewing hospital surveillance footage, police later determined Hughes used Segeda's identity and racked up thousands in medical bills.

Hughes suffered a wound to his abdomen, but was released within a day.

Police have not been able to locate him.

Anyone with information on Hughes' whereabouts is asked to call detectives at 208-4201.

2/10/2010

Times Leader

City police reported the following on Tuesday:

- Trista Sims, of Apollo Circle, reported someone threw a rock through her kitchen window and patio doors.
- Charles Miller Jr., of Front Street, reported a black landscaping trailer was stolen from Front Street.
- Police said Michael Laury, of Pittston, was cited with harassment after he allegedly shoved an ex-girlfriend.
- Police said they cited a 15-year-old male for retail theft after he allegedly stole merchandise from Weis Market.
- Judy Fisher, of South Market Street, reported someone stole the registration plate from her vehicle.
- Police said Marion Wootton, of Hanover Township, was cited for harassment for allegedly punching a woman and pulling her hair.
- Martin Ruminski, of West Noble Street, reported someone stole a pink and white Barbie Huffy bicycle.
- Police charged John Deiter Jr., 40, and Akemi Burch, 43, both of East Spring Street, with simple assault and harassment after a dispute inside their residence on Friday.

Deiter and Burch were arguing about a phone call Deiter received, and assaulted each other, according to the criminal complaints.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Deiter suffered an injury to his eye, and Burch suffered an injury to her face. Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled on Feb. 16 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

2/3/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police released information on the following incidents:

Someone broke into the Quoit Club on Railroad Street and stole money from the poker machine, jukebox and two plastic cups. Two bottles of liquor were also taken.

Someone stole three lottery tickets and a SPCA donation canister from Uni-Mart on North Market Street.

George Zelenak of Pine Street reported someone scratched his vehicle.

Leonard Bukofski reported someone smashed the patio windows to a property he owns on Orchard Street and removed two stained glass windows.

Ryan Zendarski of Glen Lyon reported someone egged his vehicle twice while it was parked on Garfield Street.

Alexander Oko of East Church Street told police someone broke into his residence and stole a handgun and a safe, which contained money and paperwork. He also reported someone entered his vehicle and stole his stereo system.

Michelle Knoss of West Noble Street said someone entered her vehicle and took various paperwork.

Tina Thompson of Kosciuszko Street said someone entered her boyfriend's vehicle while it was parked by her home and stole some loose change.

Norman Voyton of West Ridge Street reported someone stole a wrought iron gate from his property.

Donald Robinson of East Ridge Street said someone took a 36-inch Sony television, a video game system and a satellite television converter box.

Vince Bohinski of Honey Pot Street said someone smashed the windshield to his son's pickup truck.

Bernard Rentko, 38, of Union Street, was cited for public drunkenness after he was observed staggering on the 500 block of Prospect Street. He was released to the custody of his wife.

Edward Allison Jr., 37, of State Street, was arrested for public drunkenness and resisting arrest after he was found curled up outside an apartment door with vomit on himself.

2/2/2010

Man charged with stealing keg from American Legion

Citizens' Voice

A Nanticoke man is accused of attempting to steal a keg of beer from an American Legion post by claiming he was hired by one of its employees - who police say never even met him.

Joshua George Hallas, 27, is charged with burglary, criminal trespass and theft by unlawful taking. He also faces similar charges for an unrelated home burglary on Jan. 21.

According to arrest papers, police arrived at American Legion Post 350 on West Broad Street around 5:30 p.m. Saturday. A witness said she saw Hallas in the basement, walking out of the cooler with a beer keg. Hallas claimed he was hired by an employee to clean the basement and move the keg, but police said the employee denied this and didn't even know Hallas.

Hallas is also suspected of stealing two antique mirrors and a vanity desk worth more than \$2,000 from a West Noble Street home.

Hallas was arraigned in front of Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker and jailed in Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$20,000 straight cash bail. His preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 9 at 10 a.m. on both incidents.

2/2/2010

Times Leader

Michael Graboske, 47, pleaded guilty to unlawful sale and possession of stolen firearms before U.S. District Court Senior Judge James M. Munley on Monday in connection with a burglary of a sporting goods store.

Graboske, of Hanover Township, admitted to his role in the early morning burglary at Nimrod Haven Gun Shop, Sans Souci Parkway, Hanover Township, on Aug. 19.

Authorities say Graboske stole 33 handguns and sold two firearms in Nanticoke on Aug. 21, according to arrest records. Graboske faces up to 10 years in a federal prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced on May 3.

A co-conspirator in the case, Raymond Thomas Rittenhouse, 22, of Hanover Township, is tentatively scheduled for a trial in federal court on Feb. 16.

Authorities recovered 29 of the 33 stolen handguns from the pair's shared residence in the Askam section of Hanover Township.

1/29/2010

Times Leader

Police said Paul John Cimaskasy, 56, of Lincoln Avenue, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault and harassment on Wednesday.

He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint: Sandra Cimaskasy told police her husband threw a plant that struck her in the leg during a domestic disturbance in their home at about 12:40 a.m. Wednesday.

Cimaskasy denied striking his wife. Police said plants and dirt covered two rooms inside the home.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 2 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

1/28/2010

Times Leader Police Blotter

A charge of receiving stolen property against Thomas Powell, 24, was dismissed during a preliminary hearing on Tuesday.

Nanticoke police had charged Powell, of Nanticoke, with riding a stolen bicycle on Nov. 29, according to the criminal complaint.

A man accused by police of attempting to burglarize an elderly couple's home and filing a false report waived his right

to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Tuesday.

John Chernowsky, 25, of South Walnut Street, Nanticoke, waived charges of criminal attempt to commit burglary, criminal attempt to commit trespass, false reports to law enforcement and possession of drug paraphernalia to Luzerne County Court.

Police withdrew a charge of criminal mischief against Chernowsky.

Chernowsky allegedly attempted to force open a second floor window to an elderly couple's home on East Church Street on Nov. 24. He also is accused of fabricating a story that he was the victim of a robbery on Nov. 23 and possessing a syringe on Nov. 30, according to the criminal complaints.

1/27/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

- . Susan Ramos reported two antique mirrors and a desk were taken from a home on West Noble Street.
- . Scot Martinelli reported someone removed all the wiring from the basement of a West Noble Street home.
- . Chester Prymowicz of South Market Street reported someone stole a wrought iron gate from his yard.
- . Charles J. Holminski, 23, of West Church Street, was cited for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness after police were called to a domestic disturbance at his residence.
- . William Rowland, 54, of 372 E. Church St., is charged with simple assault for kicking a shoe at his wife's face and pushing her son into a wall.
- . Kenneth Humphrey, 40, of 382 E. Ridge St., 2nd Floor, is charged with simple assault and harassment for hitting his son while attempting to strike his wife, police said.

1/26/2010

Citizens' Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

- . Jennifer Mendoza, of West Church Street, reported someone smashed the driver's side window of her vehicle.
- . Andrew Antolik of South Chestnut Street reported someone smashed the rear passenger side window of his van.
- . Brianna Engle reported someone cut the driver's side tire of her vehicle.
- . Police responded to an alarm at Power Train Services on Railroad Street and discovered that someone pried open the door. Officers and a police K-9 searched the building, but did not locate anyone.

1/12/2010

Times Leader

Police released the following recent reports:

- Robert Prestash, of South Hanover Street, reported a money order was stolen from his vehicle.
- Ian Hazus, of Nanticoke, reported a window was smashed on his vehicle while it was parked at Tommy Boys Bar and Grill.
- David Holminski, of West Church Street, reported a window was smashed at his home.
- Brian Aftewicz, 29, of Nanticoke, was cited for public drunkenness after he was found allegedly intoxicated and carrying a can of beer.
- Thomas Gregorowicz, of Nanticoke, reported an air conditioner and stereo speakers were stolen from his residence.
- Robert Gogola, of Garfield Street, reported tools and construction equipment were stolen from under the porch at his home.
- Darryl Mathis, of West Union Street, reported a window was smashed at his residence.

1/9/2010

Times Leader

Police reported the following recent incidents:

- Jacqueline Perkowski, of Slope Street, reported a CD/DVD player was stolen from her vehicle while it was parked near her residence.

- Richard Wright, 26, of Hunlock Township, was cited with public drunkenness after he called police requesting a ride to his home from a Main Street business.
- Michael Crown, of Minden Court, reported someone threw eggs at his vehicle while it was parked near his residence.
- Donna Arnold Klotz, of Nanticoke, reported a rear window wiper blade was damaged on her vehicle while it was parked outside the Mill Memorial Library.
- Christine Ferris, 35, of Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness after police said she was intoxicated on South Prospect Street.
- Michael Bohinski, 29, of Nanticoke, was charged with violating a protection from abuse order after his wife said he harassed her on the telephone.
- Joseph Yench, of South Hanover Street, reported a metal gardening trestle was damaged.
- Trista Sims, of Nanticoke, reported her purse was stolen by a guest at her residence.
- Michael Engle, 35, of Nanticoke, was cited with harassment after his sister-in-law alleged he left several threatening text messages.
- Kim Littleford, 36, of Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of driving under the influence, and two traffic citations, after she drove to a woman's house on Park Street, Nanticoke, on Dec. 30. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 9 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.
- Jodelle Marie Lamoreaux, 40, was cited with retail theft for allegedly stealing razors from Weis Market.

1/1/2010
Times Leader

City police reported the following incidents:

Jane Adamczyk, of East Grand Street, reported Tuesday that someone entered her vehicle and damaged the ignition. A woman reported on Tuesday that someone broke into her South Walnut Street residence and stole Christmas presents consisting of two cards that play music, two sets of pajamas, the "Terminator Salvation" movie and a dinosaur that walks and talks.

Isabel Haydock, of South Hanover Street, reported Tuesday that someone stole a wrought iron gate from in front of her house.

Michael Whalley reported on Tuesday that someone damaged the solar lights in front of his South Walnut Street house.

Albert Huff, 42, of Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness, scattering rubbish and criminal mischief Tuesday after officers were dispatched to a South Prospect Street address on a report of a man kicking a door.

Sharon Holena, of East Church Street, reported someone threw an unopened can of beer through her front porch window.

Mildred Sukadelski, of South Hanover Street, reported Tuesday that someone damaged the windshield and front passenger door window of her vehicle.

A woman reported Tuesday that someone damaged her fence posts.

Two wrought iron gates were stolen Tuesday from in front of St. John's Orthodox Church, Welles Street.

Michael Thens, of Wilkes-Barre, was cited with retail theft after allegedly taking various food items at Weis Market on Tuesday.

1/1/2010
Times Leader

City police arrested 43-year-old Akemi Burch and charged her with attacking her boyfriend at their residence on Saturday.

Burch, of East Spring Street, was charged with simple assault and harassment, court records show.

She was arraigned and released on recognizance. A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Jan. 12.

2009

12/23/2009
Times Leader

Police said they are investigating a home burglary and the theft of a vehicle while the elderly homeowner slept Monday morning.

A person entered the residence in the 100 block of East Union Street while the homeowner, an elderly woman, was sleeping, police said.

Police said the woman discovered jewelry, prescription medication and her vehicle stolen when she awoke. Police said the stolen vehicle was a tan, four-door 2005 Chevrolet Malibu with Pennsylvania registration plate PD8024N.

Anyone with information about the burglary and thefts is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

12/22/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following unrelated incidents:

Joseph Thompson reported someone entered his apartment through an unlocked window and stole a 42-inch flat-screen television.

Amanda King reported someone threw a concrete block through the window of her brother's vehicle while he was not home.

Charles Dennis, 40, of Dallas, was cited with harassment after he had left multiple messages on an answering machine after being told not to have contact with the complainant.

Andrew Novack, of East Ridge Street, reported someone threw a piece of concrete through his living room window.

Robert Kozlowski, of South Market Street, reported someone entered his vehicle and stole change.

Tracy Zdziarski, of West Noble Street, reported someone entered her vehicle and stole her iPod.

Cindy Prestash, of South Market Street, reported someone entered her vehicle and stole change.

Joseph Golembeski, of East Union Street, reported someone entered his vehicle and stole change.

12/22/2009

Times Leader

A city woman was arrested on charges of retail theft Wednesday after police said she stole several items from Weis Market in Nanticoke.

Heather Lynn Tolodzieski, 20, of Apollo Circle, was charged after police said she stole items totaling \$46 from the grocery store.

According to an affidavit of probable cause, Tolodzieski was observed by a loss prevention officer failing to scan several items at a self-checkout aisle in the store.

The loss prevention officer followed Tolodzieski to the exit where, he said, Tolodzieski was uncooperative in providing identification and denied not wanting to pay for merchandise.

12/17/2009

A man accused by police with providing false information on an application to purchase a firearm waived his right to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Tuesday.

Times Leader

James Vonsavage, 56, of Kingston, waived charges of sale or transfer of firearms and unsworn falsification to authorities to Luzerne County court.

Police allege Vonsavage provided false information about not having felony convictions when he completed an application to purchase a gun at D&R Sporting Goods, Main Street, in June 2008, according to the criminal complaint.

12/8/2009

Police said Rhonda Ann Parry, 47, of West Grand Street, was cited with possession of drug paraphernalia after a box containing marijuana was allegedly found in her residence.

Times Leader

Police said they were investigating a dispute at the residence involving Parry and a boyfriend on Aug. 17. Police said a box containing marijuana and a pipe was hidden in a desk, according to the criminal complaint.

Police filed the charge with District Judge Donald Whittaker on Friday. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Jan. 5 before Whittaker.

12/3/2009

Times Leader

City police on Tuesday reported the following:

A safe inside Eddie and Jacks Service Center, West Main Street, was damaged during a burglary.

Police said cash and alcohol were stolen in a burglary at The Quoit Club, Railroad Street.

Amanda Robaczewski, of West Washington Street, reported someone flattened two tires on her vehicle.

Theresa Goodrich, of South Walnut Street, reported a video game system and numerous DVDs were stolen during a burglary at his residence.

12/2/2009

Nanticoke man shot in standoff beat girlfriend unconscious, according to police

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

A day before he engaged state police in an armed standoff in Conyngham Township, a Nanticoke man beat his live-in girlfriend, knocking her unconscious, according to Nanticoke police.

State police say they were forced to shoot Ralph C. Galicki, 37, on Friday when he refused to drop a handgun during a four-hour standoff at the St. Mary's picnic grounds on Moc-Lee Road.

On Thursday, police said Galicki arrived at his live-in girlfriend Nancy Giberson's 54 W. Grand St. home demanding money so he could "go score drugs." He became angered because she said she needed the money to buy her child Christmas gifts, police said.

During the dispute, Galicki smashed a telephone off the wall and punched Giberson directly in the face, knocking her to the ground. Giberson told police she "blacked out" for a short time and Galicki fled.

Police obtained an arrest warrant on charges of simple assault and harassment. Galicki was wanted on the warrant at the time he engaged police in the standoff.

According to state police at Wyoming and Shickshinny:

A trooper discovered Galicki around 12:30 p.m. Friday brandishing a handgun while sitting in a stolen vehicle at the picnic grounds. Galicki was shot and sustained a non-life-threatening wound while troopers attempted to take him into custody after Galicki refused to comply with commands to drop the firearm.

In that case, he faces charges of theft, receiving stolen property, burglary, aggravated assault, firearms not to be carried without a license, simple assault and recklessly endangering another person.

He is jailed in lieu of \$50,000 cash bail.

12/2/2009

Cops: Man lies about robbery to get pills

John Chernowsky, of Nanticoke, allegedly makes up story in an attempt to get more Xanax.

elewis@timesleader.com

A man made up a robbery story to obtain a police report that he needed to get a new prescription from a physician, according to charges filed by Nanticoke police.

John Chernowsky, 25, of South Walnut Street, Nanticoke, reported that a man with a knife demanded everything in Chernowsky's pockets near Patriot Square on Nov. 23, police said. Police said Chernowsky said he gave the bandit \$180 and a pill bottle containing 87 Xanax tablets.

Chernowsky said he walked to the police department on East Ridge Street to report the robbery but was unable to contact an officer. But police said they learned from surveillance video that Chernowsky never appeared at the police department.

Chernowsky is further accused of attempting to burglarize an elderly neighbor's residence for money to support a heroin addiction, police said.

He was charged with providing false reports to law enforcement, attempted burglary, attempted criminal trespass, criminal mischief and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Tuesday for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Chernowsky reported he was the victim of a knife-point robbery in which the thief stole money and his prescription bottle containing Xanax tablets.

Chernowsky said he could not contact an officer when he banged on the door at the police department. Police said surveillance video from the police department did not record Chernowsky at the door.

Chernowsky requested a police report on the robbery that he was going to provide to his physician for a new prescription. Police said Chernowsky later admitted he fabricated the robbery story to obtain more prescription tablets.

In a separate incident, police said Chernowsky climbed onto the rear roof of an elderly neighbor's house on East Church Street claiming he was looking for a shirt his friend had thrown on the roof on Nov. 24. Police said in the criminal complaint that they did not find a shirt on the roof.

Chernowsky later admitted he wanted to get into the house to look for money. A section of the roof and rain gutter was damaged by Chernowsky, police said.

Police said Chernowsky admitted to them that he has an \$840-to-\$1,000-a-month heroin habit.

Chernowsky was in possession of a syringe and had a rubber band around his arm when he was arrested Monday night. Police said in the criminal complaint that rubber bands are used when injecting heroin.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled for Dec. 29 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

12/2/2009

City police on Tuesday said Edward Randy Eckrote, 48, of South Prospect Street, Nanticoke, and Justin Craig Eckrote, 26, of Mill Street, West Nanticoke, were charged with assaulting Robert Gogola, 42, on Nov. 21.

Times Leader

Gogola told police he arrived at Edward Eckrote's residence with Kimberly Rittenhouse, and the two men argued about who was dating Rittenhouse, according to the criminal complaint.

Gogola said Edward Eckrote and Justin Eckrote assaulted him in the residence. Gogola told police he suffered broken ribs, a punctured lung and a broken shoulder, according to the criminal complaint.

Gogola has been charged with simple assault and harassment, according to arrest records.

12/1/2009

City police reported that they are investigating 13 incidents in which items were stolen from parked vehicles

Times Leader

Common to all of the incidents were that the vehicles were entered from the front driver- or passenger-side window, there was no forced entry and all were unlocked. All were parked, either in the street or in private driveways, on the 500 block of East Grand, South Market, South Chestnut, East Noble and South Hanover streets. Items taken have been money, wallets and credit cards.

Residents are asked to lock and secure their vehicles and call 911 if suspicious activity is observed. Anyone with information about the break-ins are asked to call police at 735-2200.

11/25/2009

Times Leader

Police reported the following:

Robert Gogola, 42, of Garfield Street, was charged with simple assault and harassment after he allegedly assaulted Edward Randy Eckrote in a South Prospect Street residence on Friday, police said.

Police said Christine Xander, 45, of East Ridge Street, was charged with theft and deceptive business practices for allegedly accepting money for five laptop computers that she did not deliver.

According to the criminal complaint:

Mark Ciecioraka of Throop told police he purchased five laptop computers on eBay from Xander in August.

Ciecioraka said he mailed two money orders to Xander for the computers.

Xander sent an email to Ciecioraka on Sept. 3 stating she received the money orders and mailed three of the five computers to him.

Ciecioraka said he did not receive the computers and Xander told him they were lost in the mail.

Police said Xander failed to reimburse Cieciora for the computers.

11/22/2009

Nanticoke man arraigned on theft charges

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A man wanted by city police was arrested Saturday morning for allegedly breaking into a vehicle for the second time in one week.

Anthony S. Brozusky, 24, of West Union Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned and charged with theft from a motor vehicle, receiving stolen property, escape, resisting arrest and criminal trespass, arrest papers state.

Police allege Brozusky broke into a man's vehicle and attempted to steal items at 277 Mountain View Drive around 6:22 a.m., according to arrest papers.

Brozusky fled and was not immediately located until police were called out to 1203 Gemini St. for a report of a trespasser who matched the same description of the suspect in the vehicle break-in, the criminal complaint states.

Arrest papers state that Brozusky was warned in court about trespassing onto the Gemini Street property following a Jan. 20 arrest in which he was charged with illegally entering the home.

During the trespassing complaint, Brozusky resisted arrest and failed to comply with the officers' commands after he was told a warrant was issued for his arrest for breaking into a vehicle earlier this week, police said.

According to a separate criminal complaint, police responded to a Loomis Street address for a report of a vehicle break-in on Monday. The owner told police he recognized the suspect as Brozusky who used to live in a nearby apartment.

Officers at the time could not locate the defendant and issued a warrant for his arrest.

A Taser used on Brozusky in Saturday's incident was ineffective, police said. He ran away, but was later spotted walking near Walnut and East Noble streets where he was taken into custody.

Brozusky was taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$20,000 bail on both sets of charges.

A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for Dec. 1 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

11/22/2009

Times Leader

Two people were charged by police with assault when they got into a fight about marijuana early Friday morning, according to charges filed.

Gregory T. Falzone, 24, and Melanie Atkins, 23, both of East Chestnut Street, Nanticoke, were charged with simple assault and harassment. They were released on \$5,000 bail each.

According to the criminal complaints:

Atkins told police she arrived home and Falzone asked her to obtain marijuana. When Atkins failed to get marijuana, she claimed Falzone became upset and struck her.

Falzone claimed Atkins scratched him, the criminal complaints say.

Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled on Tuesday before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

11/21/2009

Nanticoke bowling alley raided in marijuana bust

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2072

The L.S. Bowl-A-Rama complex at the intersection of Washington and Prospect streets is one of the sites raided by police and narcotics agents as part of an investigation into a large-scale, multi-state indoor marijuana growing operation, state police at Wyoming said.

According to police, search warrants executed Friday around 10 a.m. at several locations, including the L.S. Bowl-A-Rama, led to a seizure of 1,151 marijuana plants, three pounds of processed marijuana and about \$100,000 in cash. Police withheld the names of the people accused and the other locations searched, because the investigation is ongoing. Arrests will be forthcoming, and the case will be prosecuted through the U.S. Attorney's office, state police said.

Besides the state police vice and narcotics unit, investigating authorities include the federal Drug Enforcement Agency's Scranton office, Nanticoke City police, and the New Jersey State Police Marijuana Eradication Task Force.

"I'm glad they found it. I truly believe if that marijuana was being peddled on the streets of Nanticoke, our police would have found it. They do a great job," Councilman Joe Dougherty said. "DEA, New Jersey - this stuff had to be going

all over."

L.S. Bowl-A-Rama owner George Ellis said he couldn't comment.

The once-popular bowling and skating venue was created by the Ellis family in 1974 out of a closed-down silk mill. L.S. Bowl-A-Rama was open until 2007. However, the adjacent L.S. Skate-A-Rama building, devastated by fire in 1991, has lain vacant ever since. For many years, Nanticoke officials have been calling the deteriorated Skate-A-Rama building an eyesore.

A private developer was looking to buy the L.S. Bowl-A-Rama site for Luzerne County Community College student housing. The developer planned to demolish the complex and construct a building with roughly 120 units. LCCC was not affiliated with the project.

Dougherty said city officials have not heard anything recently about the proposed project.

11/21/2009

Indoor pot-growing operation investigated

Pa. cops: Multi-state probe includes search warrant executed at bowling alley.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A multi-state investigation is under way into a large-scale indoor marijuana-growing operation.

Search warrants were executed at several locations, including LS Bowl-A-Rama, 102 E. Washington St., Nanticoke, around 10 a.m. Friday, according to state police at Wyoming.

Attempts to reach the owner of the bowling alley were unsuccessful.

Authorities seized 1,151 marijuana plants, 3 pounds of processed marijuana and approximately \$100,000 in cash, police said.

Police said the investigation is ongoing and will be prosecuted through the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Several indictments will be forthcoming, police said.

Police have withheld the names of suspects due to the ongoing probe.

The state police Vice and Narcotics Unit, Troop P, is investigating along with the Drug Enforcement Administration Scranton Office, Nanticoke City police and New Jersey state police.

11/17/2009

Times Leader

Police reported the following:

- A 15-year-old male from Plymouth was recently cited with retail theft for allegedly failing to pay for three beverages at Weis Markets.
- Julia Gladkikh, of Hanover Street, recently reported someone damaged her vehicle while it was parked near her residence, police said.
- John Zegarski Jr., of West Broad Street, recently reported someone stole a global positioning system from his vehicle that was parked near his residence.
- Louis Reese, of Coal Street, recently reported checks were stolen from his vehicle that was parked near his residence.
- Police said copper pipe was recently stolen from houses on West Ridge, West Union and East Noble streets.
- Tami Pearce, of South Hanover Street, recently reported an iron gate was stolen from her residence.
- Christine Xander, 45, of East Ridge Street, was charged on Nov. 10 with simple assault for allegedly stabbing her husband, Dennis Xander, with a screwdriver during a dispute at their residence. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled today before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.
- Police said John Joseph Wojciechowski, 40, of West Washington Street, was charged with assaulting a man at a bar on Nov. 8.

Wojciechowski was charged with simple assault, disorderly conduct, harassment, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of marijuana. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Dec. 15 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Wojciechowski assaulted Huascar Castillo in Lacy's Bar on Nov. 8 because Castillo was talking to Wojciechowski's wife. Castillo suffered a broken nose, a broken tooth and a sprained ankle, police said.

Police said they found a small amount of marijuana and a pipe in Wojciechowski's pockets, according to the criminal complaint.

• Police said Joseph F. Baynock III, 26, of East Washington Street, was charged on Nov. 9 with assaulting his girlfriend. Baynock was charged with simple assault and harassment. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled today before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

According to the criminal complaint:

Amanda Yurksha told police Baynock struck her head with a coffee mug during an argument in their residence. Yurksha drove herself to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, Plains Township, where she initially told hospital employees that she was injured in a fall.

Police said in the criminal complaint that Yurksha suffered injuries to her face.

Baynock told police, according to the criminal complaint, that Yurksha swung the coffee mug at him and he accidentally struck her in the head with it.

11/12/2009

Convicted rapist pleads to stealing

Now serving a 14-to-28-year sentence, Joseph Eckrote admits to taking fuel.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man convicted of kidnapping and rape charges who entered a guilty plea to an unrelated theft case was sentenced Tuesday to one to two years in state prison.

Joseph Eckrote, 49, who was scheduled to stand trial on charges of theft by unlawful taking, instead entered a guilty plea. Luzerne County Judge David Lupas ordered that Eckrote's one-to-two-year sentence run concurrently to his 14-to-28-year sentence on kidnapping and rape charges.

Eckrote originally pleaded guilty to the theft charge in July, but withdrew the plea in early September and asked to be scheduled for trial.

According to court papers, police said Eckrote stole approximately 300 gallons of fuel from a bulldozer on April 6, 2008.

Police said Eckrote told them he drove his truck to where heavy construction equipment was parked on Route 11 in Plymouth Township, pried off the fuel cap of a bulldozer, poked a hole in the fuel screen and siphoned off the diesel with a garden hose.

Eckrote was ordered to pay \$1,330 in restitution costs to the Hanover Nursery, which owned the bulldozer, and more than \$400 to state police.

Lupas ordered Eckrote to have no contact with the nursery, and then ordered he be returned to the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill.

A summary count of criminal mischief was withdrawn by prosecutors.

In May, Eckrote was sentenced to 14 to 28 years in state prison in the kidnapping and rape of a woman who was left stranded in the woods.

A county jury found Eckrote guilty on Jan. 7 of kidnapping, rape, robbery, simple assault, two counts of terroristic threats and a summary count of harassment.

In March, Eckrote was determined to be a sexually violent predator by the state Sexual Offenders Assessment Board.

10/31/2009

A man was arrested by police on Thursday on charges he assaulted his mother and younger brother and huffed gasoline.

Aaron James Mulhern, 18, of Mountain View Drive, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts each of simple assault and harassment, and a single count of illegal use of certain solvents and noxious substances. He was arraigned by District Judge Michael Dotzel in Wilkes-Barre Township and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$2,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaint: Police allege Mulhern assaulted his younger brother during a fight, and shoved his mother inside their residence on Thursday. Mulhern's mother told police that her son had been huffing gasoline for most of the day.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Nov. 3 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

10/30/2009

Liquor enforcement officer charged with giving bar classified information about raid

A state police liquor control enforcement officer was charged today with giving confidential information about an impending raid at a Plymouth Township tavern.

Michael Buckley, 44, of East Grand Street, Nanticoke, was charged with hindering apprehension or prosecution and obstructing administration of law. He was arraigned by District Judge Michael Dotzel Friday afternoon and released without bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Buckley, as a LCE officer, overheard plans on Sept. 29 about other LCE officers going to Leo's Roadhouse in Plymouth Township and removing illegal gambling devices.

Investigators monitored Buckley and allegedly recorded him making numerous phone calls to Leo's Roadhouse from Sept. 29 to Oct. 16, the criminal complaint says.

During the recorded phone calls, Buckley asked a Leo Roadhouse employee if the owners "got the machines out yet?" A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Nov. 3 before District Judge Joseph Halsey in Hanover Township.

10/17/2009

A man repeatedly threatened a city detective with violence, then spit on another cop while jailed at the police station Thursday in Nanticoke, according to two sets of charges filed Friday

Citizens' Voice

Police also filed a third set of charges against Jessie Kinney, 33, alleging he attacked and assaulted a witness in one of his other criminal cases.

Investigators said Kinney, of 636 S. Walnut St., recently moved to the area from South Carolina and now has been criminally arrested four times.

According to information from the three criminal complaints:

Kinney's trouble started Thursday when he was caught trespassing inside a commercial property on Prospect Street, utilized by Detective Kevin Grevera, while contractors were doing work around 8:30 p.m. A contractor unwittingly let them in.

Grevera, who was off-duty, confronted Kinney and another man. Kinney demanded to speak to one of the workers, Randy Eckrote, saying Eckrote owed him money. Grevera told them to leave and speak to Eckrote at another time. After acknowledging he knew Grevera was a cop, Kinney threatened to "bust up" Grevera. Grevera warned him to leave or be arrested.

Witnesses say Kinney became hostile and approached Grevera in a threatening manner. Kinney continued to threaten Grevera and said he would set the building on fire.

Grevera, who has disabling injuries to both of his arms, summoned a worker to physically restrain Kinney and remove him.

Kinney walked a few feet down the road and entered the Prospect Cafe bar. Police arrived and apprehended an intoxicated Kinney in the bar.

At police headquarters, Kinney would not cooperate, before eventually being placed in a cell, police said. Around 10:40 p.m., Kinney inquired about the charges he was facing. He then spit on Officer Bryan Kata.

For the incident with Grevera, Kinney was charged with stalking, resisting arrest and harassment. He was charged with aggravated harassment by prisoner for spitting on Kata.

The other set of charges - simple assault, retaliation against a witness and harassment - stem from an altercation on March 29 when he allegedly attacked Richard Dunn, 24, on the 300 block of State Street while Dunn was walking to work. Dunn was a witness in another criminal case against Kinney.

After Dunn began to fight back, Kinney fled and threatened, "I'm going to get ya."

Kinney was arraigned Thursday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court and sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$20,000 bail.

9/30/2009

Times Leader

Police reported the following:

Police said they are investigating a residential burglary on West Church Street on Monday. A rear sliding glass door was

forced open sometime between 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Police said a .380-caliber handgun and two jugs filled with coins were stolen.

Police said at least 10 vehicles parked on South Hanover, East Grand and West Church streets were entered and items stolen between Sunday night and early Monday morning.

Police remind residents to lock their homes and vehicles, and to call 911 to report suspicious activity.

9/29/2009

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Monday to six to 12 months of house arrest with an electronic monitor on charges of manufacturing methamphetamine

Times Leader

Ernest Higgins, 55, with a last known address of Apollo Circle, was sentenced on charges of criminal attempt to manufacture methamphetamine and criminal conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine by county Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr.

Higgins pleaded guilty to the charges in January.

According to court records, on March 10, 2008, Newport Township police contacted the Walgreens Drug Store in Dallas in regards to a receipt found in a garbage bag. Police said the receipt showed the purchase of 48 tabs of pseudophedrine in December 2007, which is a main ingredient in manufacturing methamphetamine.

Police said it is state law for stores to keep a log on who purchases the drug, and learned that Higgins had purchased the tablets, as did his girlfriend, who purchased another 48 tabs just an hour before Higgins went to Walgreens.

Records indicated Higgins had purchased large quantities of the drug from the Kingston Walgreens, as much as three different trips in one day.

Higgins' girlfriend, Cathern Elizabeth Erdman, was also sentenced Monday on similar charges for the crime to six to 12 month's house arrest with electronic monitor by Olszewski.

9/28/2009

Three Nanticoke residents face numerous charges after a traffic stop Friday on Horton Street

Times Leader

Norman Mayewski, 50, was pulled over at 4:23 p.m., after police noticed his vehicle had an altered registration plate, police said.

Police patted down Mayewski and his passengers – Sandra Mayewski, 46, and Theodore Glowacki, 25 -- for officers' safety, and found the Mayewskis to be in possession of drug paraphernalia, police said, adding that Glowacki became disorderly.

Police said that during a search of the vehicle they found two firearms, one of which was stolen, ammunition, knives and more drug paraphernalia.

Glowacki was cited with disorderly conduct. Norman Mayewski was charged with weapons violations and possession of drug paraphernalia. Sandra Mayewski was charged with weapons violations, receiving stolen property and possession of drug paraphernalia.

The Mayewskis were arraigned before District Judge Andrew Barilla and lodged at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail each. Their preliminary hearing dates were unavailable on Sunday.

City police could not confirm whether the stolen gun belonged to a Hanover Township man. Township police reported on Friday that city police recovered a stolen handgun in a traffic stop in the city and called the township man to inform him they had his handgun.

9/24/2009

Man sentenced to state prison on sex charge

elewis@timesleader.com

A man was sentenced to state prison by a Luzerne County judge on Thursday for sexually assaulting an ex-girlfriend. President Judge Chester Muroski sentenced David M. Vishnefski, 23, of Nanticoke, to 38 months to 76 months on the charge of aggravated indecent assault. Vishnefski pleaded guilty to the charge on June 25.

Vishnefski must register his address and employment's address with state police under the state's Megan's Law upon

release from prison.

Nanticoke police said Vishnefski assaulted the woman on Feb. 6, according to arrest records.

9/17/2009

Drug-making charge is lodged

Robert Jacob Muntz's lawyer denies his client is a member of a motorcycle club.

elewis@timesleader.com

A man associated with the Outlaws Motorcycle Club in Ashley was charged Wednesday with manufacturing methamphetamine.

Robert Jacob Muntz, 42, of Wapwallopen, surrendered at the office of District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke, where he was charged with three counts of manufacturing a controlled substance with intent to deliver, two counts of causing or risking a catastrophe and one count of illegal possession of a firearm. He was released on \$100,000 unsecured bail.

State authorities allege several members of the motorcycle club were involved in a \$3.6 million cocaine trafficking ring. Muntz was among 22 people charged on March 18 by the state Office of Attorney General's Bureau of Narcotics Investigation in Operation Avalanche, an investigation that targeted cocaine trafficking by several members of Outlaws that had its clubhouse in Ashley. The clubhouse has since been condemned by Ashley officials.

Muntz is not a member of the Outlaws, his attorney, Ferris Webby, said on Wednesday.

Authorities allegedly discovered chemicals and contraband used to manufacture methamphetamines inside 195 W. Green St., Nanticoke, where Muntz formerly resided, on March 18.

A state police clandestine drug team, wearing protective suits, searched the home and allegedly seized chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine.

Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz said the additional charges were filed against Muntz after a state police crime lab in Harrisburg finished testing the chemicals allegedly found in the home.

Shultz also said 10 firearms were removed from the West Green Street residence. Arrest records state Muntz, who was convicted of a felony, was not permitted to own or possess firearms.

Muntz's then-residence in Nanticoke was one of four locations that were raided by undercover agents in March as a result of the investigation.

According to a 237 page criminal complaint that was filed in March:

Agents made about 30 controlled cocaine purchases from Outlaws members from July 2008 to March. Thousands of intercepted phone calls led agents to identify Anthony Manchio, of Wapwallopen, as the Outlaws' main cocaine supplier.

John Gonda, a Luzerne County correctional officer, was among those charged in March. He was suspended with pay after he was charged, according to The Times Leader archives.

Twenty-one people charged in March are facing drug-related charges in county court.

Muntz is tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Sept. 22 on drug-related charges that were filed in March, and on the latest charges, before Whittaker.

9/15/2009

Chiropractor charged with insurance fraud

elewis@timesleader.com

A chiropractor was charged by the state Office of Attorney General's Insurance Fraud Division for allegedly filing false insurance claims with an insurance provider.

Gary Peter McGee, 41, of Nanticoke, was charged with a single count of insurance fraud. He was arraigned by District Judge David Barilla in Swoyersville and released on \$25,000 unsecured bail.

McGee leased his office from another chiropractor, Dr. Paul Mahler, in which he submitted false claims to Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania using Mahler's rubber stamp signature from 2004 to 2007, according to the criminal complaint.

Authorities said in the criminal complaint that McGee allegedly submitted 74 false claims and received \$83,980 from Blue Cross.

9/15/2009

A New York man was sentenced Monday to two to four years in state prison after pleading guilty to drug-related charges.

Times Leader

Mikal Ameen, 30, with a last known address of Utica, N.Y., was sentenced by Luzerne County Judge Michael Toole on an illegal gun charge and charges of receiving stolen property, possession with intent to deliver; resisting arrest, providing false identification to law enforcement and criminal mischief.

According to court records, on Jan. 26 police responded to a Nanticoke residence for the report of a burglary. The homeowner told police someone kicked in the front door and stole a 50-inch television and Ruger 9mm handgun. The gun was sold to Ameen in exchange for heroin. Police saw Ameen's vehicle at his residence and searched it, finding a backpack in the truck, with the gun, a loaded magazine, \$1,890 and 130 bags of heroin.

The TV was given to another man, who also turned it over to police.

When Ameen arrived home, police attempted to place him under arrest, but he ran away. Ameen went into his residence and locked the door.

When taken into custody, Ameen told police his name was Daniel Gibson before he was taken to jail.

9/12/2009

A Nanticoke man was charged by township police in connection with his alleged involvement in two residential burglaries in Huntington Mills on Thursday.

Times Leader

Leo J. Jarmusik, 50, of 55 W. Field St., was arraigned Friday on two counts each of burglary, theft, receiving stolen property and criminal mischief and four counts of criminal conspiracy. He was jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

Township police allege that Jarmusik conspired with three men, including his son, Dakota, to steal several items at 108 and 46 Brittney Lane around 2:30 p.m. Both homes were vandalized.

Charges also have been filed against Christopher Jarmusik, 48, of Nanticoke, and Theodore J. Maciejczak, 28, of Glen Lyon. Police said they broke into 108 Brittney Lane and took a pellet gun, court records show.

Police said the four men drove together in a Jeep to 48 Brittney Lane where they gained entry and stole several items that were later taken to Christopher Jarmusik's home.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Sept. 16.

9/10/2009

Homeless pair charged in thefts

Man and woman are hit with theft- and conspiracy-related charges in purse snatchings.

elewis@timesleader.com

Police in Kingston Township and Wyoming filed theft- and conspiracy-related charges against two homeless persons who allegedly went on a purse snatching spree near shopping centers last week.

Nanticoke police arrested Jason Raymond Edwards, 27, and Tanya Lynn Karasinski, 23, last Thursday when they were spotted leaving Weis Markets in Nanticoke after they allegedly attempted to steal a purse from a vehicle in front of Fetch's Market in Plymouth.

Police said the pair were driving a vehicle that was reported stolen to the Plains Township Police Department on Sept. 2. After their arrests, Edwards and Karasinski confessed they stole purses from vehicles near shopping centers on the same day in Edwardsville, Shavertown and Wyoming, according to the criminal complaints.

Wyoming police allege the pair are responsible for stealing a purse from a woman while she was loading groceries into her vehicle in front of Gerrity's Supermarket on Wyoming Avenue. Kingston Township police claim the duo conspired to steal a woman's purse near Thomas' Market on the Dallas Memorial Highway.

Edwards and Karasinski stole the purses to get money to support heroin addictions, police said.

Nanticoke police said in the criminal complaints that they found purses, wax paper used to package heroin, metal spoons and syringes in the stolen vehicle.

Nanticoke police charged the pair with receiving stolen property, unauthorized use of a vehicle and possession of drug paraphernalia. Edwards and Karasinski remained jailed at the county prison for lack of \$20,000 and \$10,000 bail, respectively, on the charges filed by Nanticoke police.

On Wednesday, Wyoming police filed charges of theft against Karasinski who, along with Edwards, is also facing criminal conspiracy to commit theft. Kingston Township police filed charges of theft and criminal conspiracy to commit theft against the pair on Tuesday.

They haven't been arraigned on the latest charges filed against them.

According to court records, Edwards was sentenced to two years probation in October 2003 after he pleaded guilty to robbery for stealing a woman's purse in the parking lot of Gerrity's Supermarket in Luzerne.

Court records indicate Edwards violated probation several times by testing positive for heroin and marijuana after his sentence in October 2003.

9/5/2009

Jury indicts pair on gun heist charges

Hanover Twp. men face federal prosecution in connection with smash-and-grab robbery.

elewis@timesleader.com

A federal grand jury has indicted two Hanover Township men in the theft of 33 handguns from a sporting goods store last month.

Michael Graboske, 46, and Raymond Rittenhouse, 22, were charged in a four-count indictment with illegal possession of a firearm, unlawful sale of a stolen firearm, theft of a firearm from a licensed firearm dealer's inventory and conspiracy.

They were initially charged by police in Hanover Township and Nanticoke on burglary and theft related charges that will soon be withdrawn because of the federal indictment, Luzerne County District Attorney Jacqueline Musto Carroll said.

The federal grand jury indicted the pair on Wednesday, with the charges being made public on Friday.

Police arrested the pair in Nanticoke on Aug. 21 after they allegedly sold two handguns stolen from Nimrod Haven Firearms on the Sans Souci Parkway, Hanover Township, on Aug. 19.

According to arrest records and the indictment:

Graboske and Rittenhouse rammed a stolen car through the front doors at Nimrod Haven at about 4:50 a.m. Police said they used a metal pipe to smash glass gun cases, loaded a duffel bag with handguns and sped away in a dark-colored truck.

About 25 hours after the burglary, authorities learned the men wanted to sell some of the stolen guns, according to arrest records.

Rittenhouse and Graboske were kept under surveillance after Nanticoke police learned at about 5:30 p.m. Aug. 20 that the pair arranged to sell two handguns, a 9 mm and a .45-caliber. Police said the men had told others that they had burglarized the store and were selling the stolen guns, according to arrest records.

After their arrests, authorities searched their residence on South Main Street in the Askam section of Hanover Township, where they recovered 29 of the 33 stolen guns. Authorities suspect, according to arrest records, that two handguns were traded for crack in Wilkes-Barre.

9/5/2009

Nanticoke man pleads in punching death

William Bentley died in March after being punched outside Wilkes-Barre supermarket during a confrontation.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man scheduled to stand trial next month on involuntary manslaughter charges pleaded guilty Friday to causing the death of a Wilkes-Barre man by punching him in the head.

Zireek Gardner, 18, of East Main Street, pleaded guilty to charges of involuntary manslaughter, reckless endangerment of another person, two counts of simple assault and unrelated possession with intent to deliver charges before Luzerne County Court Judge Thomas Burke.

Gardner will be sentenced on Nov. 17, when he will face a maximum of 20 years in prison.

Assistant District Attorney Michael Vough said Friday that Gardner and William Bentley got into a fight on March 26 outside Schiel's Family Market on Hanover Street in Wilkes-Barre.

Gardner punched Bentley in the back of the head. Bentley never regained consciousness, and he died the next day after doctors said he was brain-dead.

Police said the fight was the end result of an earlier incident in which Gardner, also known as "Zock," claimed he was

robbed of drugs and money.

The two met by chance outside the grocery store later that day, Vough said.

"Is that correct?" Burke asked Gardner.

"Yes, your honor," Gardner replied.

Gardner was scheduled to stand trial on Oct. 5 after he pleaded not guilty to the charges at an arraignment in recent months.

Bentley's girlfriend, Stacey Kammer, testified at the preliminary hearing that she was with Bentley and a friend when they stopped at the store to buy food.

"I heard (Bentley) say 'I'm sorry' to Mr. Gardner. I got out of the car to defend (Bentley). That's when Mr. Gardner punched (Bentley) in the head," Kammer testified.

Kammer said she had been dating Bentley for nearly a year. County Coroner John Corcoran said Bentley died from blunt head trauma caused by a fist.

Gardner, who is currently jailed at the county prison, also pleaded guilty to a charge of possession with intent to deliver heroin Friday. That charge stems from an Oct. 10 incident in Nanticoke.

Police said Gardner and a few other men were pushing a disabled car in Nanticoke. Vough said a small bag of heroin was found at Gardner's feet, and when police approached, they found four more bags in his hand.

Gardner will be required to pay restitution to Bentley's family as well as prosecution costs when he is sentenced.

9/5/2009

Cops: Pair admit to stealing purses

Nanticoke police say homeless couple took items from cars parked near grocery stores.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A homeless pair confessed to police they stole purses from cars parked near grocery stores to support their heroin addiction.

Jason R. Edwards, 27, and Tanya Karasinski, 23, were captured Thursday in Nanticoke by city police after allegedly attempting to snatch a purse from a vehicle in front of Fetch's Market in Plymouth.

The duo confessed to three other purse snatchings near shopping centers on the same day in Edwardsville, Wyoming and Shavertown.

Edwards and Karasinski were stopped about one block away from Weis Markets in Nanticoke, where they were spotted leaving in a stolen Pontiac Grand Am, police said.

Police said they found purses, wax paper used to package heroin, metal spoons and hypodermic needles in the vehicle. Karasinski, who initially gave officers a false name, was a fugitive wanted by the U.S. Marshals Service for allegedly fleeing after previously being arrested by the U.S. Secret Service.

Edwards told police he took the car so he could get around and have a place to sleep, according to arrest papers. He also confessed to snatching purses near Edwardsville West Side Mall, Gerrity's Market, Wyoming, and Thomas' Market in Shavertown, according to police.

Police said Karasinski corroborated the purse thefts but maintained she had no idea that the vehicle was stolen.

They were arraigned and charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle, receiving stolen property and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Edwards and Karasinski were jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 and \$10,000 bail, respectively.

Preliminary hearings have been scheduled for Sept. 8.

9/4/2009

Police: Man injures pregnant girlfriend

Floyd Powell, 25, of Nanticoke, also facing unrelated burglary charges.

elewis@timesleader.com

Police accused a man of assaulting his pregnant girlfriend Monday night and receiving more than \$3,000 in stolen property in July.

Police allege Floyd Powell, 25, kicked and punched Shaqkita Welch during an argument in their apartment on East Washington Street. Welch is four months pregnant and was treated at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital because of her pregnancy, police said.

Police Capt. William Shultz said Welch had informed police that the alleged assault didn't harm her unborn child. Police further allege Powell took part with Jesse James Hartman, 23, in stealing items during burglaries from several apartments on East Union Street, where they then resided, on July 14. Several items were found in a vehicle commonly driven by Powell, police allege.

Hartman is facing several counts of burglary, criminal trespass and conspiracy, according to the office of District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

Powell was arraigned on Thursday on two counts of simple assault, and one count each of aggravated assault of an unborn child, recklessly endangering another person and harassment. He was separately arraigned on a single count of receiving stolen property.

Powell was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 total bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Welch told police she was arguing with Powell inside their apartment when he destroyed a television and her cell phone. She claimed Powell kicked and punched her in the stomach two or three times and struck her in the face.

Welch left the apartment and Powell followed her outside, where he continued to yell at her. She reentered the apartment and locked the door, which Powell kicked in, the criminal complaint says.

Powell then took off in Welch's Jeep, police alleged.

Welch told police she wanted her vehicle returned and didn't want Powell arrested. Shultz said police pursued the charges because of Welch's pregnancy.

Police allege in the criminal complaints that they found various tools and other items stolen from apartments on East Union Street on July 14 in a Chevrolet Blazer that Powell commonly drives.

Powell denied he took part in the burglaries and claimed the SUV was stolen, according to the criminal complaint.

Preliminary hearings on the separate charges are tentatively scheduled on Sept. 29 before Whittaker.

9/4/2009

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Thursday to two to four years in prison on several drug-related charges for the sale of heroin throughout the greater Nanticoke area.

Times Leader

Joshua Flaherty, 33, of East Grand Street, was sentenced on six counts of delivery of a controlled substance by county Judge Hugh Mundy. Flaherty pleaded guilty to the charges in June, and was ordered to pay nearly \$700 in restitution costs.

According to court records, on Feb. 12, Flaherty sold suspected heroin to a police informant. One day later, Flaherty sold more heroin to a police informant, as well as on Feb. 14 and 15.

Police searched Flaherty's Grand Street home on a warrant on Feb. 16, and found \$350 and 39 packets of heroin, totaling 9.8 grams, under the bathroom sink.

On that day, Flaherty told police he participated in selling heroin on each occasion it was sold to a police informant and that he gave most of the proceeds of sales to a man named "Junior." Flaherty told police he sold drugs to satisfy his heroin addiction, to pay for rent and to support his family.

9/2/2009

**ATV-riding vandals hit Earth Conservancy land
Spokeswoman says it was worst damage ever at an agency reclamation site.**

rsweeney@timesleader.com

Over the weekend, vandals created the worst damage that has ever occurred at an Earth Conservancy reclamation project, setting the site straddling Hanover Township and Nanticoke back perhaps a month and costing thousands of dollars to repair.

People riding on all-terrain vehicles broke into what is called the silt-pond reclamation site off Middle Road on the edge of Nanticoke by cutting through a chain-link fence, said Jacqueline Dickman, the conservancy's director of public affairs and development.

A stretch of 150 feet of the fence was then torn down, and ATVs were driven through the property, creating deep ruts. Bales of hay also were cut open and strewn about and burned, she said.

"We probably had about \$300,000 into the reclamation site to date," she said, but now the fence must be replaced, the ground re-leveled, the grass reseeded and the protective layer of hay scattered over it again.

“The damage this time really surpasses anything we’ve seen in the past,” Dickman said. “You might think that tearing up the grass isn’t a big deal, but considering the amount of work that went into the site ... it’s really disheartening.” The Nanticoke and Hanover Township police departments responded to calls about the damage, and at least one fire department was dispatched, though firefighters ended up allowing the fire to burn out on its own. The conservancy is considering offering a reward for information about the vandals. Anyone with such information should call the office at 823-3445.

Dickman said the conservancy is well aware of the potential for damage at its sites since they’re usually rural, but she hoped that bringing publicity to this incident might help people be more vigilant.

“There’s always a concern that our reclamation projects are going to have damage. It’s becoming a chronic problem,” she said. “It’s definitely something that happens with regularity, and I think our hope is by bringing this to people’s attention, people keep their eyes open for problems at this site and others.”

The site, which had been a repository for mine waste, is being cleaned and turned into an open green space through a federal brownfields grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

9/2/2009

Theft trial next for jailed rapist

Currently serving 14-28 years, area man withdraws guilty plea in alleged theft of fuel.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man, currently serving 14 to 28 years in state prison on kidnapping and rape charges, withdrew a guilty plea to an unrelated theft case and will now stand trial.

Citing he wanted to retain new counsel, Joseph Eckrote, 49, asked Luzerne County Judge Chester Muroski on Tuesday to allow him to withdraw his guilty plea in a case in which police said he stole approximately 300 gallons of diesel fuel from a bulldozer.

Eckrote will now be put on the next trial list in October while he waits to hire a private attorney. Muroski said Eckrote, if convicted, could face a substantial sentence because of his lengthy criminal record.

Eckrote is currently represented by attorney John Sobota.

According to court records, police claim Eckrote stole approximately 300 gallons of fuel from a bulldozer on April 6, 2008.

Police said Eckrote told them he drove his truck to the piece of heavy equipment, which was parked along Route 11 in Plymouth Township, pried off the fuel cap, poked a hole in the fuel screen and siphoned off the diesel with a garden hose.

Eckrote, who entered his guilty plea in July, was then ordered to pay \$1,330 in restitution costs to Hanover Nursery for the damage and fuel.

In May, Eckrote was sentenced to 14 to 28 years in state prison in the kidnapping and rape of a woman who was left stranded in the woods.

A county jury found Eckrote guilty on Jan. 7 of kidnapping, rape, robbery, simple assault, two counts of terroristic threats and a summary count of harassment.

In March, Eckrote was determined to be a sexually violent predator by the state Sexual Offenders Assessment Board.

8/29/2009

A West Nanticoke man was arraigned Friday on burglary and other related charges after police said he broke into a man’s home Thursday.

Times Leader

Nathan Ryan Norcross, 18, of East Poplar Street, was arraigned on charges of burglary and two counts of criminal trespassing. He was tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Sept. 1 at 10 a.m. in Nanticoke.

According to police, they were called to 412 East Ridge Street for the report of a break-in. Police said they saw a ladder against a garage and a person on the ladder. People said they heard someone in the garage and tried to get in, and startled the person inside, later identified as Norcross.

Police said Norcross tried to break out a window on the second floor to escape, but was apprehended.

8/29/2009

A city man was charged with assaulting his girlfriend after she would not let him have a night out with his

friends, police said.

Times Leader

Joshua I. Ruminski, 23, of 202 W. Noble St., was arraigned Thursday morning on single counts of simple assault, harassment and disorderly conduct, court records show. He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Nanticoke police alleged in arrest papers that Ruminski grabbed Ashley Cyron's neck, tore her shirt during an argument and then kned her in the ribs in a parking lot near Lincoln Avenue.

Officers spoke with Ruminski who told them he wanted to go out with his friends but Cyron wouldn't let him, the criminal complaint states. Cyron told police that she wanted Ruminski to spend time with her and their toddler.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Sept. 1.

8/28/2009

A city woman was arrested for allegedly throwing a picture frame at her daughter's head and pushing another relative in a bathtub during a domestic dispute on Wednesday night.

Times Leader

Anja Dunaj, 31, of 257 Apollo Circle, was arraigned Thursday on two counts each of simple assault and harassment, court records show. She was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Police allege Dunaj hit her daughter, Natalie Shaffer, before throwing the frame at her head, and when Shaffer's great-grandmother, Jadwij Kosinski, tried to intervene she was pushed by Dunaj in the bathtub at their home around 7 p.m. Kosinski told police Dunaj also grabbed her by her throat and poked her in her left eye, arrest papers state.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Sept. 1.

8/28/2009

District Judge Donald Whittaker dismissed charges

Times Leader

District Judge Donald Whittaker dismissed charges of burglary, criminal trespass, intimidation of witnesses or victims and retaliation against witnesses or victims against Shallon Gallmon, 31, of Plymouth, during a preliminary hearing on Tuesday.

Plymouth police accused Gallmon of forcing her way into an Orchard Street residence and threatening Jennifer Ridall with a chain on June 12, according to the criminal complaint.

8/25/2009

Nanticoke police arrested a drunken man early Monday morning for breaking into a vehicle at Rear 214 E. Main St., police said.

Officers responding to the call spotted Anthony S. Brozusky, 24, hiding between two vehicles at the intersection of Railroad and North Chestnut streets. Brozusky, of 1 Loomis St., is charged with receiving stolen property and public drunkenness. When police encountered Brozusky, he was in possession of an electric razor and loose change. Asked why he was carrying an electric razor at 2:15 a.m., Brozusky said he "wants to look good for the girls," according to the charges filed by officers Richard Vietz and Lee Makowski.

The owner of the vehicle outside Rear 214 E. Main St. said the razor was stolen from his car.

8/25/2009

Gun-theft suspects in trouble previously

Hanover Twp. men allegedly took 33 handguns from sporting goods store.

elewis@timesleader.com

Two Hanover Township men charged with stealing handguns from a sporting goods store last Wednesday have previous criminal records.

Raymond Rittenhouse, 22, and Michael Graboske, 46, were captured Friday night and charged with taking 33 handguns from Nimrod Haven on the Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township

They were captured after they arrived at a South Market Street residence in Nanticoke to sell two of the stolen guns, police allege.

After their arrests, a district judge approved a rare night-time search warrant for Graboske's trailer on South Main Street, Hanover Township, where authorities allegedly recovered 29 of the 33 stolen handguns. Police suspect two other handguns were traded for crack in Wilkes-Barre.

It was the second time Graboske's residence has been searched, according to court records.

Authorities with the state Office of Attorney General's Luzerne County Drug Task Force executed a search warrant at Graboske's residence on Aug. 7, 1997, after Graboske sold cocaine and heroin to informants in July 1997. Graboske was convicted on various drug-related offenses in March 1998 and was sentenced to five to 10 years in state prison, according to court records.

Rittenhouse is serving a probation sentence, which was imposed on Oct. 31 on charges he took part in stealing two purses, according to court records.

Hanover Township police said Rittenhouse and another man stole a woman's purse in the parking lot of the Hanover Mall, Sans Souci Parkway, and Nanticoke police said he stole a purse from an elderly woman on South Prospect Street. Both thefts happened on Oct. 15, 2007, according to arrest records.

Last Wednesday, police allege, Rittenhouse and Graboske rammed a stolen car through the front doors of Nimrod Haven at about 4:50 a.m. Police said they used a metal pipe to smash glass gun cases, loaded a duffel bag with handguns and sped away in a dark-colored truck.

About 25 hours after the burglary, authorities learned the men wanted to sell some of the stolen guns, according to arrest records.

Rittenhouse and Graboske were kept under surveillance after Nanticoke police learned at about 5:30 p.m. Thursday that the pair arranged to sell two handguns, a 9mm and a .45-caliber.

Police said the men had told others that they had burglarized the store and were selling the stolen guns.

Graboske and Rittenhouse were charged with burglary, criminal trespass, theft, receiving stolen property, criminal mischief and criminal conspiracy. Graboske was further charged with persons not to possess firearms.

They are jailed at the county prison for lack of \$30,000 bail each.

Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled on Sept. 1 before District Judge Joseph Halsey in Hanover Township.

8/23/2009

Police arrest two in Nimrod burglary

They are accused of stealing 33 guns from Hanover Twp. sporting goods store.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

HANOVER TWP. – Two township men were arrested Friday night and charged with stealing handguns from a sporting goods store earlier this week.

Raymond T. Rittenhouse, 22, and Michael S. Graboske, 46, are accused of stealing 33 guns in connection with the break-in at Nimrod Haven Sporting Goods, 1757 Sans Souci Parkway, on Wednesday, police said.

Police Friday night arrested the pair on **South Market Street in Nanticoke**, where they allegedly sold two of the stolen firearms to another individual, arrest papers state.

A search of their home later that evening at 3144 S. Main St. resulted in the recovery of 29 handguns stolen from the sporting good store, according to the criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke and Hanover Township police departments. According to arrest papers: On Wednesday township police responded around 4:50 a.m. to Nimrod Haven for a report of a burglary in progress.

Police were informed that a vehicle had been driven through the front doors and two men dressed in dark clothing were leaving the store. Another vehicle fled the area, possibly heading north.

Surveillance video revealed one man entered with a pipe and proceeded to smash the glass cabinets while the another suspect removed several handguns and placed them into a bag.

The two men were arrested after Graboske sold two handguns to a confidential informant for \$700 at an apartment in Nanticoke Friday night, police said.

Rittenhouse and Graboske were both charged with burglary, criminal mischief and criminal conspiracy. Graboske also was charged with illegal sale of a firearm.

Federal agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms also participated in the arrests.

The defendants were jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$30,000 straight bail each.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Sept. 1 before District Judge Joseph A. Halsey of Hanover Township.

8/18/2009

Cops: Woman uses chain in sock in threat

Latest charges vs. Plymouth resident include retaliation and intimidation of a witness.

elewis@timesleader.com

A woman was charged by Plymouth police on Monday with threatening a neighbor who allegedly witnessed an assault in June.

Police in arrest records accused Shallon Gallmon, 31, of Orchard Street, of forcing her way into a residence on Orchard Street and threatening Jennifer Ridall with a chain wrapped in a sock on June 12.

A day earlier, on June 11, Gallmon had a dispute with Ridall and Stephanie Velders outside her residence where Velders was allegedly struck by a vehicle driven by Gallmon.

Gallmon was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Monday on charges of burglary, criminal trespass, intimidation of witness or victim and retaliation against witness or victim. She was released without bail.

According to the criminal complaint and court records:

Ridall told police on June 12 that she was in her apartment when she heard loud banging and Gallmon screaming to be let inside.

Ridall alleged Gallmon forced her way in and begun yelling at her for a prior incident. Gallmon swung an object at her that police said was a chain inside a sock.

Gallmon was arrested without incident at Ridall's apartment on a warrant for the June 11 alleged assault with the vehicle.

In that case, Ridall and Velders said Gallmon was blaming them and other neighbors because Luzerne County Children and Youth caseworkers were at her home on June 11.

Velders claimed, according to arrest records, she saw Gallmon place two children in a vehicle and fail to secure them in a safety seat.

Gallmon yelled to Velders and Ridall, "I'm taking my kids out of state; I'll deal with this later," arrest records say.

Police alleged in arrest records that Gallmon threatened to run over Velders and Ridall and reversed her vehicle at a high rate of speed. Ridall jumped out of the way but Velders was struck, according to arrest records. Velders suffered arm and shoulder injuries, police said.

Police said Gallmon sped away with her two children and was arrested after she forced her way into Ridall's residence on June 12.

Gallmon is facing two counts of endangering the welfare of children, simple assault and terroristic threats, and one count each of accidents involving injury, disorderly conduct and driving while operating privilege is suspended in Luzerne County Court for the June 11 incident.

A preliminary hearing on the latest charges is tentatively scheduled on Aug. 25 before Whittaker.

8/16/2009

Times Leader - Court Notes

District Judge Donald Whittaker dismissed charges of endangering the welfare of children, simple assault and reckless endangerment against Joshua James Watkins, 22, of Nanticoke, during a preliminary hearing on Wednesday.

Nanticoke police had accused Watkins of assaulting his girlfriend and her parents during a dispute at a home on Coal Street and speeding away with her child on July 24, according to the criminal complaint.

8/15/2009

Times Leader

A Nanticoke man was charged with selling a bundle of heroin to undercover officers on Thursday night.

John Chernowski Jr., 24, of 377 S. Walnut St., was arraigned Friday on 14 counts of felony possession with intent to deliver heroin, seven counts of possession of the drug and three counts of criminal use of a communication facility.

He was jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

Borough police allege in arrest papers that Chernowski sold the bundle, equivalent to seven packets of heroin, to undercover officers on East Main Street around 8 p.m. Thursday.

8/8/2009

Times Leader

A Jamaican man was arrested on drug charges and alleged firearm violations after a crash on Thursday night.

Mario M. Whyne, 20, who has an address at 240 Park Lane, Hamilton, N.J., was arraigned Friday on charges of possession with intent to deliver, possession of a controlled substance, firearms not to be carried without a license and possession of a weapon.

Whyne told police he was not a resident of the United States but has applied for citizenship. He was jailed at county prison for lack of \$20,000 straight bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Nanticoke police responded around 9 p.m. to a two-vehicle crash at the intersection of Main and Market streets. Several witnesses and the driver of the second vehicle told police that two or three men with dreadlocks ran east on East Main Street from a 1996 Chevrolet Monte Carlo.

One of the men, later identified as Whyne, was stopped near South Walnut Street.

Whyne told police he was a 17-year-old from Trenton, N.J., who moved to the United States about a year ago. A fully loaded revolver and suspected marijuana was found in his shoulder pack.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Aug. 11.

8/7/2009

State prison for man who issued nearly \$21,000 in bad checks

elewis@timesleader.com

A man who issued nearly \$21,000 in bad checks at various businesses was sentenced to state prison.

Erik Masaitis, 25, of South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, was sentenced to 2 years and 7 months to five years and five months on seven counts of bad checks, six counts of theft, and one count each of robbery, possessing instruments of crime, false identification to law enforcement, resisting arrest and criminal attempt.

Police in several departments, including a few businesses that filed private criminal complaints, charged Masaitis with purchasing items with checks that had insufficient funds from December to April, according to court records.

Masaitis was also accused by Nanticoke police with robbing a service station on North Market Street on April 5, and by Swoyersville police with possessing a knife while they were investigating a robbery at a beer distributor on Main Street, Luzerne on May 3.

Masaitis told police, according to arrest records, that he was purchasing items from businesses knowing he had insufficient funds in his checking account. He then sold the items for money to support a heroin addiction, according to arrest records.

8/5/2009

Store owner pleads to federal gun violations

Nanticoke businessman and co-defendant in Russia charged with gun smuggling

Times Leader

The owner of a Nanticoke sporting goods store pleaded guilty Tuesday to federal charges of conspiring to illegally export military equipment to Russia.

Mark Komoroski, owner of D & R Sports Center, entered a plea to five counts of conspiracy before Senior U.S. District Judge Edwin Kosik.

Komoroski and a co-defendant, Sergey Korznikov of Moskow, Russia, were charged in January 2008 with conspiring to smuggle various equipment, including rifle scopes, firearm magazines and face shields to be sold to unknown persons in Russia.

Komoroski pleaded guilty to conspiracy to export defense articles without State Department approval.

He also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering, mail fraud, smuggling and to conspiring to make false entries into records kept by a gun store.

Korznikov has not entered a plea. The case against him is pending.

7/29/2009

A 49-year-old Nanticoke man who is serving a 14-to-28-year sentence on kidnapping and rape charges pleaded guilty Tuesday to an unrelated theft charge.

Times Leader

Joseph Eckrote pleaded guilty to a charge of theft by unlawful taking before Luzerne County Court Judge Chester Muroski. Eckrote will be sentenced on Sept. 1.

According to court records, on April 6, 2008, police said, Eckrote stole approximately 300 gallons of diesel fuel from a bulldozer.

Eckrote was ordered to pay \$1,330 in restitution costs to Hanover Nursery for the damage and fuel.

Eckrote was found guilty recently by a Luzerne County jury in the kidnap and rape of a woman who was left stranded in the woods.

7/27/2009

Man arrested on charges he assaulted woman while holding infant

elewis@timesleader.com

Police arrested a man on charges he assaulted a woman while holding a 6-month old infant on Sunday.

Joshua James Watkins, 22, of Coal Street, was charged with three counts each of simple assault and harassment, two counts of reckless endangerment, and one count each of endangering the welfare of children, accidents involving damage to vehicle and driving an unregistered vehicle. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$7,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Brittany Murtha told police her boyfriend, Watkins, was arguing with her for much of Sunday, and wanted to use their rent month to buy prescription drugs. Murtha claimed Watkins shoved her into a wall, and she locked herself in a bathroom. He forced open the door, the criminal complaint says.

Murtha alleged, according to the criminal complaint, Watkins was holding their infant when he assaulted her.

Watkins fled the home with the infant that he placed inside a vehicle. Murtha attempted to remove the infant as Watkins sped away forcing Murtha to fall to the ground, the criminal complaint says.

Watkins struck a fence on Coal Street, and was captured by Kingston police.

Watkins claimed he fled the home with the infant because Murtha's family arrived carrying bats and pipes, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Aug. 4.

7/24/2009

A man was charged by police on Thursday with stealing metal beams from a business and tools from a vehicle.

Times Leader

Ralph C. Galicki, 37, of West Grand Street, was charged with three counts of theft, two counts of receiving stolen property, and one count each of accidents involving damage to vehicle, trespass by vehicle and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Galicki stole approximately 24 metal beams valued at \$100 a piece from Eclipse Fleet Service on West Union Street on July 2. Galicki transported the beams that varied from 10 feet to 15 feet in his vehicle to his home, the criminal complaint says.

Police said they traced Galicki's travels from the business to his home by wet tire prints and broken glass.

In an unrelated case, police allege Galicki stole tools from a construction vehicle parked across from his residence on Wednesday.

Police obtained a search warrant for Galicki's residence and recovered various hand tools and accessories, according to the search warrant inventory sheet.

The criminal complaints alleged police found a syringe and a spoon in Galicki's pocket.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 28.

7/23/2009

Wing case charges dropped

elewis@timesleader.com

Linda Plews said she only wanted to speak to the manager at Weis/Mr. Z's grocery store in Nanticoke about the price of lobsters.

The next thing she knew, Plews claimed, she was being confronted by a Nanticoke police officer and charged with stealing a chicken wing from the store's deli.

"I don't steal," Plews, 53, said after charges of retail theft, defiant trespass and resisting arrest were dismissed Wednesday during a preliminary hearing in Central Court.

A district judge dismissed the charges, including disorderly conduct and public drunkenness, when the investigating officer, Amos Vanderhoff, failed to appear at the hearing.

Detective Capt. William Shultz said Vanderhoff has been on medical leave since injuring his foot arresting a suspect in an unrelated case several weeks ago.

Plews, of West Nanticoke, was charged by Vanderhoff on April 26 with allegedly stealing the chicken wing and causing a disturbance in the store.

She called the charges a "vendetta" against her because, she claimed, she was cleared of drunken driving charges filed against her by Nanticoke police.

According to Luzerne County Court records, state police at Wyoming and Kingston Township police filed separate drunken driving charges against Plews in June 2007 and October 2006, respectively.

She was sentenced in April 2008 to 60 days to one year, including a two-year license suspension, on the two DUI cases, court records say.

Plews said she was in the store because it was having a special on lobsters. When she got into a dispute with a store clerk about the price, she asked to speak to the manager. She said the clerk called police instead.

That's when trouble began, Plews said.

"I put the chicken wing on my purse and walked over to the salad bar where I always put the chicken wing in the container," Plews said. "Then Vanderhoff comes up and tells me to leave the store."

Plews claimed she was walking out of the store when Vanderhoff approached her from behind and grabbed her purse.

"When you're walking and someone comes up from behind you and grabs your purse, you're going to react," Plews said. "I didn't know who grabbed my purse. I did say, 'You're a (expletives)' to (Vanderhoff)."

Shultz said that when Vanderhoff returns to work, they'll meet with the District Attorney's Office to determine if the charges against Plews are to be re-filed.

7/22/2009

Hanover Township woman charged with driving stolen vehicle

elewis@timesleader.com

A Hanover Township woman was charged by city police with driving a stolen vehicle on Tuesday.

Dawn Linette Browski, 31, of Shawnee Avenue, was charged with receiving stolen property and possession of drug paraphernalia. She was arraigned Wednesday morning and released on \$5,000 bail.

Police said they spotted a stolen 2005 Saturn Vue traveling north on South River Street at about 3:30 p.m. The vehicle, owned by David Lewis, of Nanticoke, was reported stolen to the Nanticoke Police Department on Monday.

Police stopped the driver, identified as Browski, in the area of North River and West Jackson streets.

Browski told police, according to the criminal complaint, that she was returning the vehicle. Police said Browski was traveling in the opposite direction of Nanticoke when she was stopped.

Police said they allegedly found syringes in Browski's purse.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on July 29.

7/15/2009

Times Leader

A Nanticoke woman was sentenced Monday to two to four years in county prison on charges she sold and delivered heroin.

Erica Neyhard, 25, of West Main Street, was sentenced on two counts of possession with intent to deliver by county Judge Joseph Augello. Neyhard pleaded guilty in June.

According to court records, on Aug. 10 Nanticoke police observed Neyhard in the process of selling heroin to a man living on East Noble Street. When Neyhard was searched, police said, they found .3 grams of heroin, needles and a plastic spoon with residue on it. Neyhard's home was also searched, police said, and bricks of heroin, money and used and unused needles were also found.

Later that month, on Aug. 28, Neyhard was put under surveillance and police said they observed her selling heroin

several times throughout the day.

7/15/2009

Police arrest man for Nanticoke home invasion

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police have nabbed the man they say committed a home invasion this weekend on Agostina Drive in Lexington Village.

Police say Robert Joel Ohrwashel, 41, cut open a neighbor's screen window with a knife and entered her home around 1 a.m. Sunday looking to steal money.

Ohrwashel is charged with burglary, simple assault, trespassing, possessing instruments of a crime, and criminal mischief. He was jailed this morning in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$30,000 cash bail.

According to arrest papers:

Ohrwashel, of 23 Agostina Drive, broke into the home at 13 Agostina Drive wearing mostly black clothing — a hooded sweatshirt, cargo pants, a hat and gloves — along with a red bandana over his face. He was armed with a knife.

The victim said she was awakened by the noise and then heard her dogs growling. She got out of bed and saw Ohrwashel in her bedroom. She confronted him and they fell to the ground while fighting.

The woman told police she bit him and he bit her. She repeatedly screamed "get out." He then crawled toward a bedroom window and exited, injuring himself.

When police arrived, they interviewed the victim. Police found a knife in the room. The woman became distraught, saying she didn't know the man was armed and didn't see the knife.

State police were called to obtain a DNA sample from the woman's bite wound.

On Tuesday, Ohrwashel admitted the crime to counselors while at Community Counseling Services at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, police say. He said he was drinking alcohol heavily and decided to go looking for "petty cash." He said he brought a knife, to use as a tool, not a weapon.

Police then interviewed Ohrwashel. He said he cut a hole in a bedroom window with a knife to forcibly enter the victim's home. He said the woman attacked him and he fled the home, scraping his legs on the window sill.

Investigators said Ohrwashel had a bite mark on his finger and injuries to his legs. Forensic evidence was also consistent with the interviews with the woman and Ohrwashel, police said.

Ohrwashel told police he is a registered nurse who has been on disability since March.

He is bipolar with a history of mental illness, police said.

7/13/2009

Nanticoke police investigate early morning home invasion

Erin Moody - Citizens' Voice

Police in Nanticoke are investigating an early morning break-in Sunday in Lexington Village on Agostino Street. The unnamed victim told police someone entered the residence through a bedroom window while everyone was sleeping.

According to police, the victim reported they were asleep when their dogs began barking. The victim looked out the window and saw nothing, but when they turned around to check the rest of the home, they were confronted by a person in a mask.

The victim and the suspect struggled before the suspect fled through a spare bedroom window. Police believe the suspect forced entry through the same window he exited and fled on foot. Police arrived on the scene at about 1:05 a.m. The suspect is described as a young, white male, about 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighing about 170 pounds. He was wearing a dark-colored shirt, blue jeans and a dark-colored stocking mask. The suspect was armed with a knife, which was left at the scene.

Pennsylvania State Police at Wyoming's Forensic Unit assisted at the scene. Investigators are asking anyone who sees anything suspicious to call 911. Anyone with information should call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

7/12/2009

Cops say teen shot, injured 3

Police allege Ryan Garvey fired shotgun at two other teens and adult in Nanticoke confrontation.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

City police arrested an 18-year-old at his home in Hunlock Creek early Saturday in connection with a late-night shooting on Friday.

Ryan J. Garvey, of 374 Misdale Road, was charged with three counts each of aggravated assault, simple assault, reckless endangerment, terroristic threats and stalking and one count of possessing instruments of crime, according to arrest papers.

A fight over a girl at a bazaar in Sugar Notch led to alleged threats and gunfire, police said.

Police allege Garvey fired a shot from a shotgun at two teenage boys, both 16, and a mother of one of the teens in the area of South and South Prospect streets around 11 p.m.

The three sustained minor injuries when they were sprayed by pellets from the shotgun.

“Because of the distance between all of them, they walked away with superficial injuries,” said Detective Capt. William Shultz of Nanticoke police.

Police spent several hours searching for Garvey, who at one point fled into the woods in Newport Township. Garvey was later located by global positioning on his cell phone, the detective said.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police responded around 10:55 p.m. to the area of 1108 S. Prospect St. for a report of a 1997 Jeep circling a home of one of the teens in Nanticoke.

Robert Cook told police that he was at the Sugar Notch bazaar with several friends when Garvey called the cell phone of Kayla Tarnowski, Garvey’s girlfriend, and asked her if she was with one of his friends. He had her give the phone to Cook, and Garvey then threatened Cook. Garvey made several threatening phone calls and was observed several hours later circling Cook’s home six times.

A short time later, Garvey fired a shot, hitting Robert, his mother, Kirsten Cook, 44, and Dominick Rogo and then drove off.

Police collected evidence, including one shell casing, from the roadway at the 1100 block of South Prospect Street.

After fleeing, Garvey made numerous phone calls threatening to harm the teens and himself.

Garvey was arraigned Saturday before District Judge Joseph Carmody in West Pittston and remanded to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$25,000 straight bail.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 21 in Central Court.

7/7/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Mailee Stone, of West Union Street, recently reported someone threw a rock that smashed the rear window on her vehicle.

Police said they arrested Michael A. Foschini Jr., 19, of West Main Street, on charges he assaulted his father and mother on Thursday.

Foschini was charged with six counts of disorderly conduct, two counts each of simple assault, harassment and criminal mischief and a single count of resisting arrest. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$1,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Foschini was upset that his brother removed a radio from his vehicle. He denied commands to stop yelling profanities and jumped on a Ford Mustang owned by his mother, Carol Raush.

Police allege in the criminal complaint Foschini jumped off the vehicle and charged at his parents, grabbing Raush and his stepfather, David Raush Jr..

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on July 9 in Central Court.

Police said they arrested Duane Krommes, 29, of East Broad Street, on charges he assaulted his wife on Sunday.

Krommes was charged with simple assault, stalking and harassment. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$7,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Krommes was arguing with his wife, Clarice Krommes, when he allegedly pushed her into a wall and threw a telephone at her.

Police said Clarice Krommes suffered injuries to her chest.

Krommes claimed he tripped over his shoes and fell into his wife, the criminal complaint says. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on July 13 in Central Court.

Gwen Brown, of Garfield Street, recently reported a flat screen television, a video game system, video games and accessories, and a music player were stolen during a burglary at her residence.

Police said William Thomas, 50, of Coal Street, Nanticoke, was charged with public drunkenness after he was found intoxicated in the 500 block of South Market Street.

Catherine Holminski, of West Main Street, recently reported Carol Shotwell, 37, of East Grand Street, Nanticoke, jumped into her swimming pool without permission, police said.

Michael Stankiewicz, of State Street, recently reported a wheel was stolen from his vehicle.

Police said a 15-year-old boy and a 15-year old girl were recently cited for violating the city's curfew ordinance when they were observed on East Union Street at night.

Arthur Owens, of East Union Street, recently reported someone stole his lawnmower.

Police said two 14-year-old girls and a 15-year-old girl were recently cited for violating the city's curfew ordinance when they were found at night at Arch and Walnut streets.

William Larson, of West Grand Street, recently reported someone slashed the rear tires on his vehicle.

Jason Chamberlain, of East Ridge Street, recently reported someone smashed a window at his residence.

7/2/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Eric Shaw, of West Church Street, recently reported someone smashed the window on her vehicle with a rock.

Daniel Edwards, 26, of West Main Street, Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness after he was recently found lying on the sidewalk near Burger King, police said.

Dennis Ardoline, 44, of East Union Street, Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness after he walked into a utility pole on South Walnut Street.

Ronald Novakoski, of East Green Street, reported someone threw fireworks at his residence, damaging a carpet and exterior siding.

6/24/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Police arrested Michael Anthony Rosario, 19, of Glen Lyon, after he was allegedly found with pill tablets without a prescription on Monday.

Rosario was charged with possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and loitering and prowling at night. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were watching a known drug house when they observed Rosario walking in the area at about 11:40 p.m. Rosario noticed police in the area and attempted to escape by running behind homes.

Police found Rosario hiding behind an apartment building. He claimed he was walking to Glen Lyon, the criminal complaint says.

Police allege in the criminal complaint they found approximately \$400 and 10 Vicodin tablets in his pockets. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on July 1 in Central Court.

Barbara Robaczewski, of Park Street, recently reported items were stolen from her vehicle when it was parked near her home.

Sherry Karvaski, of West South Street, recently reported a digital camera and a DVD movie was stolen from her home, police said.

Nathan Zannetti, of East Union Street, recently reported a stereo was stolen from his vehicle when it was parked near his home, police said.

John Jackolski, of West Union Street, recently reported three tires were stolen from the rear of his home.

Brian Moore, of Loomis Street, recently reported someone attempted to force open the doors on his vehicle when it was parked near his home, police said.

6/23/2009

A man was arrested by police on Sunday for allegedly assaulting his wife.

Stephen Minsavage, 46, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault and harassment. He was arraigned by District Judge Fred Pierantoni in Pittston and released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Police alleged Minsavage assaulted his wife during an argument at their home on June 20. Police said the woman suffered facial injuries, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on June 30 in Central Court.

6/16/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

William J. Thomas, 50, of Bear Creek Boulevard, Wilkes-Barre, was arrested on Saturday for allegedly assaulting a police officer and attempting to break into an ex-girlfriend's residence.

Thomas was charged with two counts of criminal mischief, and one count each of aggravated assault, simple assault, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. He remained jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Monday for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Thomas attempted to break into the residence of Tammy Maslowski, of Enterprise Street, at about 1:12 a.m. Saturday. Police said Thomas damaged a lock on a screen door and yelled obscenities at Maslowski.

Thomas allegedly struggled with officers when he was handcuffed and threatened to bite officers. Police also allege that Thomas kicked an officer's leg.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on June 22 in Central Court.

Kelci Pamela Jones, 20, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, is facing burglary and theft-related charges in connection with the theft of a video game system from a residence on South Market Street in April, police said.

Police allege in the criminal complaint that Jones entered the residence on April 9 and stole a video game system that she sold to a pawn shop in Hanover Township. Jones is further charged with criminal trespass and receiving stolen property.

The charges were filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Monday. A preliminary hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

Christopher M. Benson, 19, of Nuangola, is facing charges of driving while under the influence of a controlled substance after a crash on South Prospect Street in April, police said.

Police allege in the criminal complaint that Benson, driving a Chevrolet Malibu, crashed into three parked vehicles at about 12:53 p.m. on April 30. Benson claimed he lost control of his vehicle when he struck a manhole cover.

Police allege in the criminal complaint that a chemical blood test revealed Benson was under the influence of several

controlled substances, including hallucinogens, immediately after the crash. The charges were filed on Monday with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on July 21 in Central Court.

Police said Richard Conrad Gimbi, 52, of West Green Street, Nanticoke, was charged with drunken driving on Monday after a traffic stop in May.

Gimbi was stopped for passing through a red traffic signal at Kosciuszko and East Main streets, and driving in opposing traffic on South Market Street on May 23, according to the criminal complaint.

Police allege that a blood alcohol test revealed Gimbi had a BAC of 0.266 percent, more than three times the limit at which an adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered legally intoxicated.

Drunken driving and several vehicle offenses were filed on Monday with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on July 21 in Central Court.

Police said Jeffrey D. Jones, 24, of West Poplar Street, Nanticoke, was recently cited with public drunkenness when he was found lying face down alongside of a road.

Police said Lee David Antonik, 33, of East Ridge Street, Nanticoke, was recently cited with harassment after Manfred Uding claimed he slapped him inside a bar.

Two stained glass windows were stolen recently from a residence in the 100 block of East Church Street.

Chad Fullerton, 23, of Apollo Circle, Nanticoke, was recently arrested for allegedly violating a protection from abuse order, police said.

A couple were charged on Saturday for allegedly assaulting one another, police said.

Eric Jason Roman, 34, and his girlfriend, Laura Ann Shulla, 29, both from East Green Street, Nanticoke, were charged with simple assault and harassment. They were jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Shulla claimed Roman assaulted her during an argument Friday night. Roman claimed he was taking a shower when Shulla assaulted him because he wouldn't give her money. Police said Shulla had a minor facial injury.

Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled on June 22 in Central Court.

6/12/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

A 14-year-old girl was recently cited with harassment after allegedly throwing a bottle at another female juvenile.

Two girls, ages 14 and 15, were recently cited with harassment after allegedly assaulting another female juvenile.

Stanley Bralczyk, 19, of Lee Mine Street, Nanticoke, was recently cited with operating an all-terrain vehicle without insurance on East Field Street.

Frank Isaac, of Nanticoke, recently reported his cell phone missing from a friend's residence in the Apollo Circle apartment complex.

Anthony Stanley Brozusky, 23, of Loomis Street, Nanticoke, was charged Monday with allegedly assaulting a woman. Brozusky was charged with simple assault and harassment. He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Anna Lipperini claimed Brozusky struck her in the face during an argument at his residence, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on June 18 in Central Court.

6/11/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Joseph Antonik, of East Field Street; Brandy Hower, of West Union Street; Edward Glazenski, of East Field Street; Pamela Mulaski, of East Field Street; Juan Hartman, of East Field Street; Lauren Pockevich, of East Field Street; Carol Keber, of East Field Street; and Allison Knuczon, of South Chestnut Street, recently reported someone damaged their vehicles while they were parked near their homes.

Nancie Giberson, of State Street, Nanticoke, was recently cited with harassment and criminal trespass after she allegedly slapped a neighbor, police said.

Megan Richmond, of West South Street, recently reported her wallet was stolen from her residence.

Vince Balint, of West Noble Street, recently reported a global positioning system, a satellite radio, headphones and an iPod were stolen from his vehicle while it was parked near his home, police said.

6/6/2009

A city man has been arrested and charged in connection with a strong-arm robbery in mid-October

Times Leader

Jeffrey W. Arnott, 21, last known address 60 W. Green St., was arraigned Friday morning on counts of robbery, simple assault and recklessly endangering another person, according to court records.

He was released on \$1,000 unsecured bail.

Arnott was arrested on an outstanding warrant, police said.

He was an occupant in a vehicle during a traffic stop by Jackson Township police.

Nanticoke police alleged in arrest papers that Arnott held up a neighbor, Dwight Cole, by knife point and ordered Cole to give him all of his money at a West Green Street apartment on Oct. 14, 2008.

Cole handed over six \$20 bills, police said.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for June 15 in Central Court.

6/4/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Arcangela Savallisch, of West Noble Street, recently reported someone stole a bicycle from her residence, police said.

Rose Swick, of South Chestnut Street, recently reported someone placed rocks on the steps to her front porch and dumped glass clippings and charcoal through the front door's mail slot.

Anita Switzer, of East Union Street, recently reported her purse was missing from her residence, police said.

D'Andra Rasmus, of Gemini Street, recently reported her purse was stolen from her vehicle when it was parked near the Uni-Mart on East Main Street, police said.

Police said a 16-year-old boy and a 14-year-old boy were recently cited for violating the city's curfew ordinance and underage drinking when they were seen standing near the Burger King, Main Street, early in the morning. Police said the 16-year-old was also cited for harassment.

Police said a 16-year-old girl was recently charged with disorderly conduct for throwing items at two people on East Main Street.

Police said Susan Price, 48, of East Green Street, is facing a harassment charge after Stephanie Danko, of Nanticoke, claimed she had left derogatory messages on her answering machine.

Joshua Ruminski, of West Noble Street, recently reported a key and money were stolen from his vehicle when it was parked near his home.

Police said James Hakim, of Wilkes-Barre, recently reported a donation jar for missing children was stolen from Pizza Bella. The jar was recovered on East Noble Street, police said.

A man and a woman were charged by police on Tuesday with assaulting one another. Richard John Morris, 57, and Theresa Marie Chesney, 48, both from Nanticoke, were charged with simple assault and harassment. They were released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Morris and Chesney were involved in an argument at Morris' residence on Monday. Morris claimed Chesney bit his arm and Chesney claimed Morris shoved her head against a wall, the criminal complaint says.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled on June 10 in Central Court.

5/31/2009

Citizens' Voice

City police reported the following incidents:

Edward Babetski, 63, of 104 N. Main St., Ashley, was picked up on a warrant for his arrest after he was observed by officers outside of a bar on South Prospect Street on Friday.

Catrina Calarco, of South Main Street, reported on Friday that someone attempted to enter her home by breaking a window, police said. Access was not granted.

Times Leader

William Hughes, of East Union Street, reported on Friday that someone stole the fog lights off of his vehicle while it was parked near his home.

A 13-year-old boy had his blue 20-inch Next bicycle stolen from in front of a neighbor's home while he was visiting on Friday.

Amber Amos, of West Union Street, reported on Friday that two boys, ages 14 and 16, alleged she owes someone they know money and threatened her and her son. They will be issued harassment citations.

Jose Rivera, of West Ridge Street, said someone stole his cell phone from his residence Friday.

Melissa Dillon, of Apollo Circle, someone entered her home through a window and stole a PlayStation 3, approximately 20 assorted games and a DVD player on Friday.

5/30/2009

City police reported the following incidents:

Times Leader

Todd Grohowski, 43, of West Church Street, was cited with harassment. He allegedly pushed his ex-girlfriend to the ground and striking her in the chest on Tuesday.

Paul Lasecki, of South Hanover Street, reported on Tuesday that someone smashed his vehicle's rear window.

Charges of simple assault and harassment were filed on May 22 against 23-year-old William M. Conway, of 309 W. Main St. He allegedly hit his girlfriend, who is eight months pregnant, during an argument at 6:08 p.m. on May 21, police said.

5/30/2009

A city woman was arrested and charged with assaulting her boyfriend during an argument on Friday

Times Leader

Danielle N. Sangemino, 29, of 508 E. Main St., Apt. 2, was arraigned Friday on counts of simple assault and

harassment, court records show. She remains jailed at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail. Nanticoke police allege Sangemino attacked William Park at 204 Apollo Circle at 3:26 p.m. Park had scratches on his face, neck and chest, police said. A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for June 2 in Central Court.

5/30/2009

Motorist in high-speed chase was drunk, police say

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke woman accused of leading police on a high-speed chase April 26 before crashing into a railroad crossing sign in Nescopeck Township was driving while intoxicated, police said.

Debra Ann Dykins, 49, of Nanticoke, faces charges of driving under the influence of alcohol, fleeing police and 10 traffic violations.

Police said Dykins was ejected from the car when she crashed and was airlifted to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville with serious internal injuries.

According to police:

Dykins fled when Newport Township police tried to stop her car, a 1990 Buick Century. The chase proceeded through Newport Township, Conyngham Township and eventually to River Road in Nescopeck Township, where the crash occurred around 10:20 p.m.

She was apprehended Friday on an arrest warrant and sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

5/28/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following incidents:

Erin Olshefski, of East Green Street, reported on Tuesday that someone stole an iPod and a cell phone with charger from her vehicle.

One 16-year-old and two 17-year-olds were cited with trespassing after officers' observed the juveniles skateboarding at the Kanjorski Center, East Main Street, on Tuesday.

David Sullivan, of West Main Street, reported on Tuesday that someone keyed the rear door of his vehicle.

Thomas Atchue, 36, of 61 Academy St., Plymouth, was arrested on outstanding warrants after he allegedly was seen by Sgt. Brian Williams and Officer Bryan Kata parked in a vehicle on East Noble Street on Tuesday, police said.

Fred David, of West Main Street, reported Tuesday that someone took a Husky knife, cash and medication from his vehicle.

A criminal mischief citation was filed Tuesday against Rafael Munoz-Castro, 36, of 407 W. Main St., after he was allegedly seen on video surveillance pulling flowers out of a flower bed in front of Jerry's Market, West Main Street, police said.

Munoz-Castro was also cited with disorderly conduct and trespassing after being given notice of trespassing at the same market, police said.

Lynn Brown, of West Grand Street, reported Tuesday that someone stole two cushions from her lawn chairs, which were on her front porch.

Frederick Sivulich, of Glen Lyon, reported on Tuesday that someone threw eggs at a vehicle while it was parked on East Church and South Market streets.

Patricia A. Decker, 39, of 426 S. Walnut St., was cited with public drunkenness after police alleged that she was involved in a domestic dispute outside her home on Tuesday.

A Virginia man was arrested for allegedly assaulting his estranged wife outside of a home on Friday night.

Ravi D. Perry, 38, of 327 36th St., Newport News, Va., was arraigned Saturday on charges of simple assault, harassment and disorderly conduct, court records show. He was released on recognizance.

Police allege Perry approached Daveina Perry, placed her in a headlock and tried to take her car keys outside her sister's home at 210 College St. at 7:03 p.m., arrest papers state.

Two witness told police they saw Ravi Perry attack the woman and place her in a chokehold, the criminal complaint states. .

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for June 1 in Central Court.

5/28/2009

Nanticoke man faces assault charges in alleged beating of his pregnant girlfriend

Citizens' voice

Police have charged a Nanticoke man for beating his pregnant girlfriend, according to charges filed.

William M. Conway, 23, repeatedly punched his girlfriend, who is eight-months pregnant, in front of her other child last Thursday at 309 W. Main St., police said.

The woman, Erin Shea, told police Conway punched her in the face and head several times and she dropped to the floor to protect herself.

Conway faces charges of simple assault and harassment.

According to charges filed:

The assault occurred around 6 p.m. when the two began arguing about the way Shea disciplined her 5-year-old son.

After the assault, Conway grabbed her keys and cell phone and left the home. Shea stood in front of his truck and he continued to inch his vehicle forward, hitting her stomach with the bumper.

Conway had been out on bail and awaiting trial on accusations he stabbed a man in the abdomen at the Hanover Village Apartments in November.

He faces charges of aggravated assault, simple assault and recklessly endangering another person in that case.

5/21/2009

Eckrote sentenced to 14 to 28 years in prison

Sheena Delazio - Times Leader

Joseph Craig Eckrote, 48, of Nanticoke, was sentenced today to 14 to 28 years in prison followed by 36 months of probation on charges stemming from the kidnapping and raping of his ex-girlfriend. Eckrote was also ordered to register with Megan's Law for the remainder of his life.

A county jury found Eckrote guilty of kidnapping, rape, robbery, simple assault, two counts of terroristic threats and a summary count of harassment in January.

According to state police at Wyoming, Eckrote's ex-girlfriend told investigators Eckrote forced her into her car outside a Plymouth Township home on May 17, 2008.

The woman said she had returned home from work that day, when Eckrote emerged from the deck area of the house.

The woman said he charged at her, grabbed her with both hands and forced her into the car.

The woman said she began screaming "no" to create a disturbance and get some attention, and honked the car's horn.

She told police she reached into the console and removed a knife and tried to stab Eckrote in an effort to get away, but the knife got bent and Eckrote began driving away.

Eckrote told her that he was going to kill himself if she didn't drop the protection from abuse order against him and drove to the area of the Plymouth Flats near the Susquehanna River.

The woman said Eckrote told her to remove her shirt, pants and under garments and that he "wanted to have sex with her one more time before he killed himself."

The woman said she believed Eckrote was under the influence of some type of drug at the time. He then raped her.

Eckrote then tried to drive away with the woman, police said, but realized the vehicle was stuck in the mud. The woman said Eckrote then told her to start walking and make a right turn. She complied, she said, because she was afraid Eckrote would attack her again. She took her cell phone from her pocket and called 911. Police said they searched the area for Eckrote but were unable to find him.

He surrendered last May at the office of District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

5/19/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Erica Neyhard, of West Main Street, was recently captured on an arrest warrant for alleged failure to appear at a court hearing in Luzerne County, police said.

Mindy Bayne, of Pine Street, recently reported someone stole lawn ornaments from her yard.

Graffiti recently was found on a road sign on Industrial Park Road and on a utility building at the West Side playground.

Lee Warren, of West Noble Street, recently reported someone stole 12 solar lights from his front yard.

Modern Gas, West Main Street, recently reported a window was smashed at the business.

5/15/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Eclipse Collision Center, West Union Street, reported May 6 that someone cut a chain-link fence and hacked apart several van bodies and stole aluminum from the business.

Mark Tarnowski reported Friday someone stole a stereo from his vehicle while it was parked near his residence on East Union Street.

Chad Fullerton, 23, of Apollo Circle, was arrested on Saturday on allegations he violated a protection from abuse order when he forced his way into his ex-girlfriend's apartment.

Paula Pucci reported Saturday someone stole numerous hanging flower baskets and potted plants from a Flower Tent set up on Lower Broadway.

Desmond McCarthy, of Glen Lyon, reported Saturday someone stole an i-phone from his vehicle while it was parked at the Uni-Mart.

Melissa McGovern reported on Sunday someone stole landscape lighting from her yard on Pine Street.

Brittnee Jeckell, of Mountain Top, reported Monday someone damaged her vehicle while it was parked on Christian Street.

Gregory John Winslow, 33, of East Spring Street, Nanticoke, is facing charges of simple assault and harassment for allegedly punching a woman on Thursday.

Mary Tesar told police Winslow punched her several times in the head because he was upset that he missed playing darts, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said Tesar suffered facial injuries.

A preliminary hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

5/14/2009

Times Leader

City police reported the following:

Police said Kenneth Lange, 19, of South Market Street, Nanticoke, was cited with disorderly conduct after a fight involving several juveniles in the Hanover Section on Saturday.

A 14-year-old girl was cited with violating curfew; a 14-year-old boy was cited with disorderly conduct, public drunkenness, underage drinking and violating curfew; a 17-year-old boy was cited with underage drinking and violating curfew; and a 17-year-old boy was cited with violating curfew.

Kenneth Gill, caretaker at Quality Hill Playground, reported on Saturday someone damaged the field house with graffiti, police said.

Sharon Colatosti, of Loomis Street, reported someone stole a pressure washer from her garage on Monday, police said.

Ann Marie O'Donnell, of Nanticoke, reported items were stolen from her vehicle while it was parked on West Main Street on Sunday, police said.

Alise Kyznewski, of West Grand Street, reported on Wednesday a cooler containing beer and liquor was stolen from her rear porch, police said.

5/13/2009

Police: Man rams vehicle into ex-girlfriend's vehicle

elewis@timesleader.com

A West Nanticoke man was charged by police on Wednesday for allegedly ramming his vehicle into his ex-girlfriend's vehicle.

John Joseph Purvin Jr., 48, address listed as the Flamingo Motel, state Route 11, was charged with four counts each of stalking and criminal mischief, and one count each of possessing instruments of crime, terroristic threats, trespass by vehicle, accidents involving damage to parked vehicle and reckless driving. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Erin Fletcher and Leon Becker heard a loud crash outside her residence on West Broad Street at about 8:35 p.m. Tuesday. When they went outside, they observed Purvin speeding away in his vehicle and Fletcher's vehicle damaged.

Residents on West Broad Street told police they observed Purvin, Fletcher's ex-boyfriend, twice ramming Fletcher's vehicle, the criminal complaint says.

Another resident observed Purvin, according to the criminal complaint, knocking on Fletcher's door and returning to his vehicle to ram Fletcher's vehicle.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on May 20 in Central Court.

5/8/2009

Knife-wielding robbery suspect feeding heroin addiction

Citizens' Voice

A desperate heroin addict with a violent criminal history robbed a Nanticoke gas station at knife-point last month to get money to feed his drug addiction, police said in arrest papers.

Erik Masaitis, 24, pulled a knife on a clerk at Swither's Gas Station, 77 N. Market St., and got away with about \$200 on April 5, police said.

In a two-page written confession, Masaitis told detectives he used the money to purchase heroin. According to arrest papers, he said he has a 20-bag-a-day heroin habit, which police said would cost between \$320 to \$400 per day.

Masaitis was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on charges of robbery and theft. He has been in custody since Saturday night when he allegedly attempted to rob the Convenient Food Mart on Main Street in Luzerne at knife-point.

Police said Masaitis peddled away on a bicycle when his plot to rob the store was thwarted and was soon apprehended. He struggled with officers, who located a knife up his sleeve, police said.

Masaitis was out on bail on a host of charges when he committed the two alleged robberies, court records show. He has been arrested at least 20 times on various charges in 2009, most notably for writing thousands of dollars in bad checks, court records show.

Masaitis is jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of a combined bail of \$112,000 cash, plus capias warrants and parole violations, prison officials said.

Masaitis served jailed time for shooting another man in the thigh in South Wilkes-Barre in 2003 during a botched drug deal and is pending trial in the alleged knife-point robbery of a Posten Taxi driver in 2008.

5/7/2009

Times Leader - City police reported the following incidents:

Denise Salzo-Kelly, of East Ridge Street, reported Saturday that someone knocked the driver side mirror off her vehicle, police said.

Robert Broski, of East Washington Street, reported Sunday that he had video surveillance of someone squirting ketchup on his vehicle.

Police said Robin Jones, of Loomis Street, reported on Sunday that someone stole two red plastic gas cans from her porch.

Joseph Tencza, of Walnut Street, reported on Friday that after being alerted by his dog he observed a male on a skateboard taking a 5-by-7 sheet of stainless steel from his yard.

Robert Steinruck, 38, of 901 Mark Drive, Hanover Township, will be cited with disorderly conduct and criminal mischief after police were called to a disturbance between him and his ex-girlfriend on West Grand Street, police said. Police said he jumped onto the hood of her vehicle and kicked out the windshield.

5/7/2009

Accused of forged prescription, area man faces hearing

Alexander Oko, charged in forgery, criminal contempt case, has court date today.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man accused of forging a prescription in March is scheduled to appear for a preliminary hearing today in Central Court.

Alexander Oko, 23, of 419 E. Church St., was arraigned last Monday on charges of criminal contempt and forgery, court records show. He was jailed but released the same day on 10 percent \$50,000 bail.

Nanticoke police alleged Oko forged a prescription for 120 Percocet pills by using a doctor's name at CVS Pharmacy, 555 E. Main St., on March 26. A pharmacist who thought the prescription was suspicious notified police the next day.

According to the criminal complaint:

On March 27, police spoke with Christine Kropiewnicki, a pharmacist at the Nanticoke pharmacy, who questioned the prescription dropped off by Oko the night before.

The handwriting on the prescription did not match the doctor's handwriting, Kropiewnicki and another pharmacist, Karen Briggs, told investigators. Kropiewnicki called the doctor's office in Huntington Mills and determined the prescription had been forged.

Oko continued to call the pharmacy asking whether the prescription was going to be filled.

He was later identified in a photo lineup. Surveillance from the store was also obtained.

On April 7, police spoke with Dr. Donald Stone, who recalled speaking with the CVS pharmacist on March 27. He also verified he did not write a prescription for Oko, a former patient of his.

Oko's hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. this morning in Central Court.

5/7/2009

Edwardsville man charged with robbing friend

Police allege man took cell phone, cash from a man after threatening him.

jmarckini@timesleader.com

An Edwardsville man was arrested and charged with allegedly robbing a friend of his cell phone and cash in March. John J. Ricko Jr., 24, of 92 Atlantic Ave., was arraigned Monday on charges of robbery and theft by unlawful taking, court records show. He was jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility on 10 percent of \$75,000 bail.

City police said Ricko robbed his friend, Richard Dunn, of his money and Motorola Razor cell phone on Shea Street, near East Main Street, around 12:30 a.m. March 30.

According to the criminal complaint:

Dunn came into police headquarters later that morning to report Ricko had robbed him. Dunn said that on March 29 he met with Ricko on his way home from work in the area of East Main Street near JP Mascaros Inc. and hung out with him most of the day at his house.

Later that night, he and Ricko walked to Citizens Bank, 75 N. Market St., so Dunn would be able to get money from the ATM using his state Access Card. Dunn told police he took out \$100.

The pair then walked to the Uni-Mart, 61 E. Main St., and purchased \$15 worth of items. After they left and once they approached Shea Street, Dunn alleged, Ricko robbed him.

Dunn said Ricko demanded his cell phone and money and threatened him, stating, "he would be lying on the pavement."

Dunn told police he knew that Ricko carries a knife, so he gave him the money and phone.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for next Tuesday in Central Court.

4/28/2009

Woman charged in chicken wing theft

elewis@timesleader.com

A woman was charged by police on Monday for allegedly stealing one chicken wing from a grocery store.

Linda Plews, 53, address listed as the Flamingo Motel, state Route 11, Plymouth Township, was charged with retail theft, disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, criminal trespass and public drunkenness. She was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police said Plews was inside Mr. Z's at about 5:30 p.m. Sunday and ordered a specific size lobster tail for a specific price. When a store employee said there are only certain size lobster tails available at a fixed price, police alleged Plews became upset and started yelling obscenities at store employees.

Plews refused to leave the store. When officers advised her she was under arrest, Plews picked up her purse and a partially eaten chicken wing fell out, the criminal complaint says.

A store employee told police the chicken wing came from the store's deli bar.

Police said Plews refused to place her hands behind her back when officers attempted to handcuff her, according to the criminal complaint.

4/18/2009

Times Leader

- Joseph Sauers, of Hill Street, reported on April 2 that off-road lights were stolen from his vehicle.
- A wedding ring and money were stolen during a burglary at a home in the 1100 block of South Market Street on April 3.
- Three firearms were reported stolen from D&R Sporting Goods, Fairchild Street, on April 3.
- A music player, a video game system and money were stolen during a burglary at a home on West Broad Street on April 3.
- A homeowner in the 1000 block of South Market Street reported on April 5 that someone entered her residence through a basement door. No items were reported missing.
- Maureen Mangino, of Birch Street, Nanticoke, reported on April 10 that her purse and a global positioning system were stolen from her vehicle while it was parked in the area of Sarny's Fitness Center, Middle Road.
- A video game system, video games and video game accessories were stolen from a home in the 1000 block of South Market Street on April 10.
- Phillip Rismiller, of Hill Street, reported on April 10 that money and other items were stolen from his vehicle while it was parked near his residence.
- Oreste Ruotolo Jr., 32, of Spring Street, Glen Lyon, was charged with possessing marijuana and public drunkenness after he passed out on a porch of a home on April 3. He was charged with possession of a small amount of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and public drunkenness. He is scheduled for a preliminary hearing on May 11 in

Central Court.

• Heather Ann Szymaszek, 34, of Apollo Circle, was charged with endangering the welfare of children for allegedly leaving her 5-year-old at home alone while she went to a bar on April 4.

According to the criminal complaint:

A man told police he left his apartment at about 10:50 p.m. April 4 and noticed a boy in a window at the Apollo Circle apartment complex crying and screaming for his mother. The man returned home several minutes later and continued to hear the boy crying and screaming.

The man talked to the boy through the window and learned that Szymaszek was at a bar and left the boy home alone. Police entered the apartment that they described as being in disarray and with an unsanitary refrigerator that did not have ample food for the child.

A phone bill found in the residence listed Szymaszek as the tenant of the apartment. A neighbor told police that the child has been left home alone previously. The child was then taken into protective custody by Luzerne County Children and Youth Services, police said.

Police said they were notified at 1:14 a.m. April 5 to call Szymaszek in connection with the child being missing. Szymaszek told police, according to the criminal complaint, that she left the apartment when the child was sleeping to give her father a ride home from the Prospect Street Caf?. She admitted to police, the criminal complaint says, that she consumed a drink at the caf..

4/6/2009

Police look for suspect who robbed Nanticoke gas station

Erin Moody - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke City Police are searching for a man who held up Swithers Gas Station at knifepoint Sunday afternoon. At about 2:11 p.m., police were dispatched to the gas station at 77 N. Market St. The clerk working in the station said a man entered the building from the east side and demanded money.

Police said the clerk handed over cash that he was holding and he had intended to put in the drop safe. The suspect directed him to open the cash register, and the clerk took out money and gave it to him, according to authorities.

The amount of money taken was not immediately known, police said. The suspect had an 8-inch fixed blade hunting knife with him and police said he fled in the direction he came, behind the Wyoming Valley Transmission building. The suspect, who is described as a white male in his 20s, between 5 feet 5 inches and 6 feet tall, 135 to 150 pounds, clean shaven, with blue eyes and brown hair that was longer than his ears. He was wearing a brown coat, light blue shorts that went past his knees and a light-colored fishing hat.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200, ext. 205 or 207.

3/31/2009

Nanticoke police investigate rash of vehicle fires

Citizens' Voice

Someone deliberately set vehicles on fire in the area of Loomis and Dewey streets in Nanticoke on Sunday, city police said.

The first incident occurred around 10:47 p.m., when residents of 109 Loomis St. noticed a small trash container had been set on fire inside their 2008 Isuzu truck. The truck's owner put the fire out and, upon checking the area, noticed a burning vehicle console on the front porch of 25 Dewey St. The resident called 911 and kicked the console to the sidewalk.

The Nanticoke fire department arrived to extinguish the fire and found ownership papers for a vehicle belonging to the resident of 37 Loomis St. A firefighter sent to that address noticed the back seat of a 1994 Chevrolet pickup truck was ablaze. Nanticoke police discovered the truck's console was the one that had been set on fire at 25 Dewey St.

On Monday morning, state police Fire Marshal Ronald Jarocha determined the three fires were intentionally set.

Nanticoke police are continuing to investigate the vehicle fires, as well as several incidents on Loomis Street involving

the ransacking of unlocked vehicles.

Anyone with information or who may have observed anything suspicious is asked to call Nanticoke City Police at 735-2200 ext. 205 or 207.

3/31/2009

Nanticoke teen charged in man's beating death at Wilkes-Barre supermarket

cjones@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-211

An 18-year-old Nanticoke man was arrested Monday on charges related to the beating death of a Wilkes-Barre man, who died Friday at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, Plains Township, after he was assaulted outside a South Wilkes-Barre grocery store Thursday night.

Zireek Rahim Gardner, of 810 E. Main St., was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge William Amesbury on involuntary manslaughter, recklessly endangering another person, and simple assault charges in 25-year-old William Bentley's homicide. Gardner could serve up to nine years in prison and have to pay a \$20,000 fine for the three misdemeanor offenses. He was in custody at Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Monday for lack of \$75,000 straight bail.

Gardner punched Bentley once Thursday night outside Schiel's Market on Hanover Street, according to arrest papers. Bentley and Gardner had "an encounter" earlier, Luzerne County District Attorney Jackie Musto Carroll said, but would not elaborate on the disagreement, saying law enforcement is "looking into it more thoroughly."

The incident was recorded on one of Schiel's security cameras Thursday night and shows Gardner hitting Bentley, police said. Bentley died Friday from "blunt trauma to the head," and it was ruled a homicide by Dr. Gary Ross, who performed the autopsy Saturday. Bentley was not conscious when police arrived. He suffered cardiac arrest Thursday and was revived by hospital personnel, but he had no brain activity and was placed on life support until Friday night. Because doctors determined Bentley would not recover from the injuries, his family decided to pull him off life support and he was pronounced dead around 6 p.m. Friday, according to the police report.

Bentley's death was directly related to the assault, Musto Carroll said, but given the nature of his death prosecutors deemed "it was not an intentional killing but an involuntary manslaughter."

There has been "virtually no crime" in the last 15 months at Schiel's, Wilkes-Barre police Chief Gerard Dessoie said after reviewing crime reports. Off-duty police officers sometimes provide security for the store, but Dessoie wasn't sure if an officer was on scene at the time of the incident.

"People should not feel that this reflects on Schiel's market in anyway," Dessoie said. "It was a random meeting of two individuals who had a previous dispute with each other. It could've happened anywhere."

Gardner's preliminary hearing will be April 8 at Central Court.

3/27/2009

Police: Son arrested for dispute with mother

Times Leader

A man was charged Friday morning on allegations he prevented his 70-year old mother from leaving a bedroom during a dispute.

John Joseph Everhart, 31, of Honey Pot Street, Nanticoke, was charged with stalking and unlawful restraint. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Police said Everhart's mother locked herself in a bedroom during an argument Thursday night. Everhart kicked the door open and refused to let her mother leave, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on April 6 in Central Court.

3/27/2009

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Thursday to two to four years in state prison on burglary charges

Times Leader

Edward Bath, III, 25, of East Ridge Street, was sentenced by Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski, Jr. Bath pleaded guilty to the charges in January.

According to court records, on June 29, Bath stole numerous lottery tickets and packs of cigarettes from Ruminski's Market on Market Street. Police said the items amounted to \$521.29.

Bath was ordered to pay more than \$1,000 in restitution.

3/20/2009

A city man was arrested on charges he broke into a garage on West Ridge Street on Tuesday.

Damon J. Millan, 18, of 139 Park St., was arraigned Wednesday morning on counts of burglary and criminal trespass, according to court records. He was jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 straight bail. Millan is accused of breaking into Zachary Hallas' garage at 49 W. Ridge St., the criminal complaint states. Police arrived to the burglary in-progress around 5:30 p.m.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for March 25 in Central Court.

3/20/2009

Meth-making materials taken from suspected lab

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

Authorities seized more than 40 pieces of evidence and 10 guns from a Nanticoke home that authorities suspect was being used as a methamphetamine lab, according to an inventory list filed after a search warrant was executed on the residence.

Investigators obtained a search warrant on the 195 W. Green St. home Wednesday morning after going there to arrest occupant Robert Muntz, 42, one of 22 charged in connection with a drug ring allegedly operated by the Outlaws Motorcycle Club.

Authorities said they seized cold medicine packets, gallons of hydrochloric acid and drain cleaner, antifreeze, iodine tincture, peroxide and camping fuel, all products typically used to operate methamphetamine labs. In addition, the inventory list says police took funnels, aluminum foil, glass jars, metal screens, a digital scale, a turkey baster, glass dishes, electrical cooking plates and a camping stove, much of which was tarnished with red residue, a common remnant of meth production. The items are commonly used to produce meth, police say.

"Everything will be tested from here," said Luzerne County District Attorney Jackie Musto Carroll. "In the meantime, we'll evaluate the case while awaiting test results."

The weapons seized from Muntz's home include seven rifles, two shotguns and a pistol, according to the search warrant inventory list filed in the office of Magisterial District Judge Donald Whitaker in Nanticoke.

Muntz was charged with delivery of methamphetamine, manufacturing methamphetamine and criminal use of a communication facility in connection with the probe into the Ashley-based Outlaws Motorcycle Club, the local affiliate of a dangerous nationwide biker gang.

Muntz's name is referenced several times in the 237-page affidavit filed in support of charges against the 22 people arrested Wednesday.

Authorities wiretapped phone calls that Joseph John "Skidmark" Janick, 44, placed to Muntz to order methamphetamine in February, the affidavit says. Officers then conducted a surveillance operation in Nanticoke and witnessed Janick meet with Muntz, police said.

Janick is identified by authorities as the president of the local chapter of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club.

Muntz is jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$250,000 cash bail. Authorities have not said if he will face additional charges for the suspected meth lab.

3/19/2009

Police converge on suspected meth lab

Elizabeth Skrapits - Citizens Voice

The white multi-family home with children's toys on the front porch and St. Patrick's Day decorations in the window was the last place neighbors expected to house a possible meth lab.

Officials from the state Attorney General's Office, Nanticoke police, state police and Luzerne County District Attorney Jackie Musto Carroll's office swarmed 195 W. Green St. in Nanticoke on Wednesday night, investigating what Musto Carroll said appeared to be the components of a methamphetamine lab.

Earlier, Pennsylvania Attorney General Tom Corbett announced the break-up of a \$3.6 million cocaine ring allegedly run by the Outlaw Motorcycle Club. One of the people arrested was 42-year-old Robert Muntz, who lived in the home. Because the area around it is densely populated, Musto Carroll said authorities were "taking all precautions to ensure

everything is safe.” She believed the people who lived in the other unit in the house were evacuated.

Residents said the neighborhood is quiet.

“It’s unbelievable. I’m really blown away,” said Kathy King as she walked past the house with her 8-year-old daughter. “I’m surprised it didn’t blow up.”

Muntz is charged with one count of delivering methamphetamine, one count of manufacturing methamphetamine and one count of criminal use of a communications facility. Musto Carroll said it is too early to determine what other charges he could face.

3/15/2009

Times Leader

City police said they arrested a Wilkes-Barre man in connection with an illegal drug purchase operation at Apollo Circle Housing Complex on Wednesday.

Jaladel C. Fishley, 24, of 157 Welles St., was arraigned Thursday morning on counts of possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver, criminal use of communication facility and possession of drug paraphernalia, according to jail records.

Fishley posted \$10,000 bail and was released from jail.

Police alleged Fishley, known to authorities as “L,” sold two bricks, or 100 bags, of heroin to a confidential informant during Wednesday’s drug investigation.

A cell phone used to set up the heroin deal and a bag of marijuana was found on Fishley, police said.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for March 19 at Central Court.

3/15/2009

Times Leader

City police are looking for 24-year-old Justin Eckrote, who is wanted on drug possession and delivery charges stemming from a foot pursuit last week.

Officers Amos Vanderhoff and Sgt. Joe Guydosh observed two suspicious people, a man and woman, entering a known location for drug activity at a home on West Main Street on March 8, according to police.

The man, later identified as Eckrote, was observed to have something in his hand when police approached him. Eckrote fled when officers called to him, police said.

Police were unable to locate Eckrote but said they found five bundles of heroin in the area he fled.

A warrant for Eckrote’s arrest has been issued, police said.

3/8/2009

Nanticoke police arrest man after stealing car

Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police arrested a man Friday night after he allegedly stole a friend’s mother’s vehicle.

On Friday morning, Kathleen Levandowski, 221 Apollo Circle, Nanticoke, reported her car keys for a 1996 Dodge Stratus and around \$180 were stolen from her house.

She said she allowed Anthony John Dupak Jr., 18, an acquaintance of her daughter’s, to stay at her house Thursday night because he did not have a place to sleep.

According to a police affidavit, around 10 p.m. Friday, Wilkes-Barre police found the stolen vehicle near the Anthracite Newsstand on Public Square, with Dupak behind the wheel.

Officers took Dupak into custody. He is charged with theft, receiving stolen property and driving without a license.

Dupak remains jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$3,000 bail, prison officials said.

3/8/2009

Man driving stolen car arrested by authorities

Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police arrested a man Friday for allegedly stealing a vehicle and driving with a suspended license. Police said they stopped Joshua George Hallas, 26, of 49 W. Ridge St., Nanticoke, after he drove through a stop sign on South Market Street, Nanticoke on Friday night.

He was operating a green 1995 Oldsmobile that had been reported stolen by Patricia Medura and Timothy Caruthers of South Hanover Street. A records check showed Hallas' drivers license was suspended. Hallas was free on \$5,000 unsecured bail on Saturday.

3/3/2009

A 24-year-old Nanticoke man pleaded guilty last week to several drug-related offenses, including an incident in which police say he kidnapped a 15-year-old girl.

Norman Mayewski, of East Main Street, entered the plea before Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Michael Toole. Mayewski faces a 20-year maximum sentence on the kidnapping charges alone.

Toole said Mayewski will be sentenced on April 17 at 9 a.m. on two counts of manufacturing a controlled substance, five counts of delivery of a controlled substance, one count each of possession with intent to deliver, kidnapping and intent to possess a controlled substance.

Police said Mayewski sold suspected crack and heroin to a police informant and was found in possession of anabolic steroids during a search of his home in 2007.

When police stopped his car to arrest him on Oct. 22, 2007, Mayewski gave the 15-year-old girl – a passenger in the car – an altered soda can that contained crack. While out on bail on the drug charges, police arrested Mayewski on Nov. 23, 2007, in connection with the girls' kidnapping and assault.

The girl testified at a previous preliminary hearing that she was forced into a car by Mayewski and assaulted. Toole ordered Mayewski to have no contact with the girl and pay more than \$800 in restitution and other costs.

2/27/2009

**Nanticoke man arrested on rape charges
Police allege David Vishnefski attacked ex-girlfriend after she broke off relationship.**

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A man was arrested Thursday on allegations he raped a 22-year-old woman he knew at a city home. David M. Vishnefski, 23, of Nanticoke, was arraigned on charges of first-degree rape, a felony, along with multiple counts of aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and unlawful restraint, according to court records. He is jailed on \$75,000 straight bail.

A warrant was issued for his arrest on Tuesday, police said.

Vishnefski is accused of forcing the victim to have sexual intercourse at his West Green Street home during the early-morning hours of Feb. 16, the criminal complaint states.

The Times Leader does not identify victims of alleged sexual assault.

According to the criminal complaint:

The victim appeared at Nanticoke police headquarters to report she had been raped by Vishnefski earlier that morning.

The victim said she broke off the relationship of approximately three years with Vishnefski, but the two agreed to reside together to raise their 18-month-old child.

Police said there is an extensive history of domestic violence involving the two at the Nanticoke home starting in August 2008.

The victim told police Vishnefski wanted to talk to her about the recent break-up. Vishnefski became enraged, according to the criminal complaint, and punched several holes in the wall before punching his own face.

The victim told police she tried to leave a bedroom, but Vishnefski would not allow her to. After several minutes of arguing, the victim alleged, she was held down and forced to have sex against her will.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for March 5 at Central Court.

2/24/2009

More stained-glass windows stolen in Nanticoke

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke's stained-glass burglars have struck again.

In the last week, thieves stole a stained-glass window from the dining room of a home that was previously targeted at 344 E. Church St., according to the real estate agent trying to sell the home.

At least 10 vacant properties in Nanticoke and Newport Township that are for sale had stained-glass windows stolen

from them in the last several weeks. Several windows were taken from 344 E. Church St. in the initial wave of thefts. However, one piece remained. After the initial theft, the rear door was secured with new locks, said Nikki Callahan, a Realtor from Classic Properties in Kingston.

The burglars gained entry to steal the remaining stained glass, Callahan said.

“Unbelievable,” Callahan said Monday. “I went there yesterday to show the house, and I realized the dining room window was no longer there.”

Callahan has been trying to rent the home for the owner until a buyer could be found. She previously had a lease agreement signed for the home, then the prospective tenants backed out after the burglary was discovered. She said the people who looked at the home Sunday agreed to rent it anyway.

Police continue to investigate the thefts. No arrests have been made.

2/18/2009

A city man who was the subject of an ongoing heroin trafficking investigation was arrested after authorities raided his home on Monday

Times Leader

Joshua Flaherty, 33, of 126 E. Grand St., Apt. 2, was charged with multiple counts of manufacturing, delivering or possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance and criminal use of communication facility, according to court and jail records.

Flaherty is jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$30,000 bail.

Nanticoke police alleged Flaherty sold heroin to an undercover officer four times – twice on Friday, and once on Saturday and Sunday, according to arrest papers.

Authorities raided Flaherty’s home on Monday as a result of the undercover purchases, the criminal complaint states. According to the complaint:

On Monday, a search warrant was executed at the Nanticoke home where city police and members of the county Drug Task Force say they seized 39 packets of heroin under a bathroom sink and \$350 cash in Flaherty’s front pants pocket. Each packet was identical to the ones Flaherty sold to the undercover officer, according to the criminal complaint. Police allege Flaherty told them his involvement in selling the drug was to satisfy his own heroin addiction, along with securing funds to pay for the rent and to support his family.

A preliminary hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Feb. 25 at Central Court.

2/11/2009

Nanticoke man faces drug, DUI charges

Times Leader

A man whom police said they saw vomiting outside an idling vehicle was arrested when officers allegedly found heroin packets in his coat and on the ground.

Jamie Fernandez-Maldonado, 24, of West Union Street, Nanticoke, was charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and two counts of driving under the influence. He was released on \$3,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police observed Fernandez-Maldonado leaning outside of a vehicle and vomiting in the 300 block of Maple Street at about 2:45 a.m. Saturday. Police said the vomit had an odor of alcohol.

Fernandez-Maldonado got out of the vehicle and dropped 10 heroin packets on the ground.

Police also said they found 19 heroin packets in Fernandez-Maldonado’s coat pocket.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled on Feb. 17 in Central Court.

2/10/2009

Thieves target valuable stained-glass windows

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

Homes for sale in Nanticoke City and Newport Township have been targeted in the last week by burglars who are stealing high-priced stained-glass windows, police in the two municipalities say.

At least 10 properties, nearly all of them vacant and awaiting a buyer, have been hit, police say.

The thefts are harming potential sales of the homes because buyers are reluctant to purchase a house that was burglarized, a local real estate agent said.

Realtor Nikki Callahan, of Classic Properties in Kingston, said she had a lease agreement completed for a \$150,000 home at 344 E. Church St. in Nanticoke while the home was being marketed for sale, but the renter backed out after he discovered the theft.

“He was going to move in. He went there to do some work and found it. His children are now afraid to live there,” Callahan said.

Homes targeted in Nanticoke were on East Church, South Prospect and East Green streets. Properties burglarized in Newport Township were on Coal, East Main and West Main streets in the Glen Lyon section, as well as Old Newport Street in Sheatown.

In most cases, burglars forced entry into the home and broke the window frames to take the stained-glass. Police say they are searching for leads and are asking the public for help in solving the crimes.

“They’re making money out there somehow. They’re worth big bucks,” said Newport Township police Chief Rob Impaglia.

Pieces of stained-glass could be worth hundreds of dollars, or more, depending on the quality and design, according to various news reports of stained-glass thefts around the country.

“This has been going on for quite a while in Reading and Philadelphia. It’s starting to hit up here,” Impaglia said.

Impaglia suggests sellers either remove the stained-glass, or hide it from view, to avoid being victimized. Those with vacant homes are being asked to check their properties.

Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz said he suspects desperate drug addicts are behind the thefts.

“As the heroin addicts were stealing copper tubing, they’re now switching to stained-glass windows,” Shultz said.

“Evidentially, there is a market for them and they have a place to get rid of or sell them.”

Police are asking anyone with information to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 or Newport Township police at 735-2000.

2/8/2009

Nanticoke man faces charges of stealing video games from store

Police arrested a man on allegations he walked into a Blockbuster Video store and walked out with eight video games. Edward Lee Ruzanski, 24, of Lincoln Avenue, Nanticoke, was charged with a misdemeanor count of retail theft and false identification to law enforcement officers, according to West Pittston police.

He was jailed for lack of \$10,000 bail, police said.

Police alleged Ruzanski stole \$508.72 worth of Playstation 3 games without paying from the video store at 801 Wyoming Ave., on Feb. 1.

An officer observed a suspicious vehicle to the rear of Insalaco’s Shopping Center, police said.

A check of registration and owners information revealed that the driver had a suspended license, according to police.

The vehicle was pulled over. A passenger, later identified as Ruzanski, provided a false birth date, police said.

Shortly after the traffic stop, police said Blockbuster Video called 911 to report the theft.

Ruzanski fit the description of the alleged suspect and was taken into custody, police said. The video games were recovered.

Police are investigating if he is responsible for several other thefts from the video store.

2/6/2009

Nanticoke woman refused to proceed with criminal charges against her husband, who was accused of allegedly throwing a dart at her.

John Wojciechowski, 40, of North Washington Street, waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Thursday, sending a single count of resisting arrest to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Prosecutors withdrew charges of simple assault, reckless endangerment and possessing instruments of crime against Wojciechowski when his wife, Kimberly Wojciechowski, refused to testify against him.

Nanticoke police alleged in arrest records that John threw a dart that stuck the leg of his wife during an argument at their residence on Jan. 28.

Police alleged Wojciechowski struggled with officers and kicked a police cruiser.

2/5/2009

A Nanticoke woman pleaded guilty in Luzerne County Court to raping a child.

Tracy Vasholz, 34, of Minor Avenue, pleaded guilty before President Judge Chester Muroski on Monday to rape of a child.

She is scheduled to be sentenced in May.

Hanover Township police alleged Vasholz raped and sexually assaulted a now 18-year-old male from January 1995 to August 2006 at various locations, according to the criminal complaint.

2/3/2009

Edward Lee Ruzanski, 24, of Lincoln Avenue, Nanticoke, was charged on Monday after he allegedly was observed throwing heroin packets out of a vehicle during a traffic stop

Times Leader

He is charged with possession of a controlled substance and tampering with physical evidence and was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint: Edwardsville police spotted a vehicle suspected to be involved in a series of retail thefts leaving the Mark Plaza parking lot on Jan. 23. Kingston police stopped the vehicle, driven by Jason Chamberlain, on Wyoming Avenue. Police alleged they found marijuana in Chamberlain's pockets.

Ruzanski, a passenger in the vehicle, was observed allegedly throwing heroin packets out a window, police said. Police further alleged a second passenger, Kyle Garbett, 23, of Nanticoke, was wanted by Hanover Township police on a retail theft charge.

Chamberlain was charged with possession of a small amount of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. He is tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Feb. 26 in Central Court. Ruzanski is tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Feb. 10. Garbett is tentatively scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Feb. 12.

1/31/2009

Burglary arrest leads to capture of drug dealer

hruckno@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2109

A Nanticoke man arrested in connection with a burglary in the city led to the apprehension of an accused drug dealer, according to documents filed in Luzerne County Central Court.

Eric Keefe, 27, who last resided at 243 rear E. Green St., was arrested just before 1 a.m. Friday at a home on West Main Street, Nanticoke police said. He was wanted on outstanding burglary charges.

Keefe was charged with burglary and firearms violations, as well as theft and receiving stolen property, arrest papers indicated.

He was committed to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$10,000 cash bail, police said.

According to arrest papers:

The burglary occurred Jan. 26 at a home in Nanticoke. The resident, whose name was withheld by police, told authorities someone stole a handgun and a 50-inch television.

The resident told police Keefe sold the handgun to a drug dealer named, "Danny," in exchange for heroin.

Through the resident, police learned "Danny" had the gun in a backpack in the trunk of his car with \$1,890 in cash and 130 bags of heroin. He and the resident had planned to take those items to New York, police said.

Police took the bag from the trunk and replaced the money and drugs with other items before they staged an arrest of the resident.

After police took the resident into custody, "Danny" left the house to go to the car. He was taken into custody after a brief standoff with police.

Once in custody, "Danny" identified himself as Daniel Gibson, but Daniel Gibson had no prior record. A fingerprint analysis positively identified him as Mikal Ameen.

Ameen was taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility to await arraignment. He remained incarcerated Friday night in lieu of \$10,000 cash bail, prison officials said.

The resident was released from custody.

1/29/2009

Breaking News: Nanticoke man assaults wife with dart 2:49 p.m. - Citizens' Voice

Police say John Wojciechowski threw a dart at his wife, Kimberly, from less than 10 feet away and the dart lodged in her right thigh.

Wojciechowski was charged with simple assault, recklessly endangering another person, possessing instruments of a crime, and resisting arrest.

According to police:

The incident occurred around 10:30 p.m. after Wojciechowski's wife repeatedly asked him to turn down the loud music he was blaring at their 126 W. Washington St. home. She was playing darts at the time with the couple's teenage daughter. When he refused, she turned it down herself. He turned it back up, and she turned it down again.

Wojciechowski became "enraged," took a dart and flung it at his wife.

The woman told police her husband was highly intoxicated and had been drinking since 10 a.m.

When police arrived, Wojciechowski had already left the residence. Police later located him at the residence around 1:10 a.m. Officers say he struggled with police while being placed in the police car.

1/28/2009

Nanticoke men charged in vehicle break-in

Times Leader

Two city men were charged in connection to a vehicle break-in just after midnight on Monday, police said.

James M. Bramich, 19, and Robert J. Albertson, 22, both of 209 Apollo Circle, were arraigned Monday on counts of theft by unlawful taking and receiving stolen property, according to court records. Both are jailed for not being able to produce \$5,000 bail.

Bramich was also charged with scattering rubbish, police said. Albertson was also charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled for Feb. 4 at Central Court.

According to the criminal complaint:

Nanticoke police were dispatched to 810 S. Hanover St. for a report of two men attempting to break into a vehicle. The victim, Dan Osko, told police his vehicle was entered and his girlfriend's purse had been stolen.

Osko told police he heard something outside a residence and observed two men inside the vehicle with the interior light on, police said. He then began yelling and both suspects fled.

The purse's contents – a Playboy belt buckle lighter, Sharpie markers and a Brittany Spears body spray – were found on a sidewalk near the corner of West Grand and Maple streets. Officers found both males, Bramich and Albertson, near South Prospect and East Noble streets.

Albertson was in possession of a red glass object with residue producing an odor of suspected burnt marijuana, the criminal complaint states.

1/27/2009

New York man arrested on firearm charges

Times Leader

Police said they arrested a New York man and seized 130 heroin packets and recovered a handgun stolen during a burglary on West Main Street on Tuesday.

Mikal Ameen, 30, of Utica, was arrested after he attempted to run away from police. Police said Ameen stole a handgun from a home that he intended to sell in New York City, according to arrest records.

Ameen was charged with persons not to possess firearms, firearms not to be carried without a license, receiving stolen property, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance, escape, resisting arrest, false identification to law enforcement and criminal mischief. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to arrest records:

Police were investigating a burglary at the West Main Street home where a television and a .9-mm caliber handgun was stolen. Police recovered the television, and later found the handgun in the trunk of a vehicle.

Police also found, according to arrest records, heroin inside the trunk.

Police said they replaced the handgun and heroin with other items in the vehicle. Police kept an eye on the vehicle and

allegedly observed, according to arrest records, a man enter the vehicle.

When police moved in, the man, identified as Ameen, fled into a residence where he was captured, police said in arrest records.

1/21/2009

Western Pa. man returned to area to face charges in Luzerne County

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2072

An Erie County man's 15 months on the run from Luzerne County authorities came to an end Tuesday.

Jared Samuel Amoroso, 28, faces a variety of charges from Wilkes-Barre and Wilkes-Barre Township police, including 14 counts of recklessly endangering another person, resisting arrest, giving false information to law enforcement officers, and a slew of traffic offenses ranging from careless driving to DUI.

"I've never had anybody go to these lengths to escape traffic charges," said township police Sgt. Thomas Wardle.

Jackson Township police arrested Amoroso for drunk driving on Dec. 12, 2005. Luzerne County Judge Patrick Toole issued a warrant for Amoroso's arrest when he failed to appear in court on Aug. 15, 2006.

Wardle was doing traffic detail on East Northampton Street the evening of Sept. 27, 2007, when he clocked Amoroso doing 57 miles per hour in a 25-mph zone, arrest papers state.

When Wardle pulled the car over, he noticed a strong odor of alcohol on Amoroso's breath and saw an open can of beer in the cup holder and a 12-pack of beer behind the passenger seat. Amoroso ran into the woods during field sobriety testing. An officer spotted him in the area of Watson Court, but Amoroso fled on foot on Interstate 81.

Police discovered it would be Amoroso's fourth DUI offense and that his license was suspended.

Law enforcement officials found Amoroso living in an apartment at 363 N. Washington St. in Wilkes-Barre, and shortly before noon on Oct. 2, 2007, Luzerne County sheriff's deputies came to arrest him.

Amoroso, who was only wearing black mesh shorts, leapt from a third-story window to a neighboring roof, then jumped 40 feet to the ground and ran to a waiting vehicle, arrest papers state.

Amoroso eluded authorities all day, leading them on a chase through several municipalities in his ex-girlfriend's 2005 Hyundai, which he abandoned when police closed in on him on Spencer Street in Hanover Township. Amoroso disappeared into the woods.

His landlord, retired Greater Nanticoke Area high school principal Thomas Kubasek, had been in phone contact with Amoroso and arranged to bring him his clothing and dog and some money.

Kubasek was put in the Accelerated Rehabilitation Program for 12 months on three charges of hindering apprehension or providing aid to a fugitive, court records show.

Luzerne County Sheriff's Deputy Jennifer Roberts said authorities got court orders for Amoroso's cell phone and MySpace records. The Fugitive Task Force of the U.S. Marshal's office located Amoroso in Erie County, where he was originally from.

"He was on our 'Top 25 Most Wanted' list for a while," Roberts said.

Court records show Amoroso was brought to Luzerne County from the Erie County prison. He is also wanted in Venango and Warren counties. Roberts said he would be extradited to face charges.

Magisterial District Judge Martin Kane arraigned Amoroso on Tuesday. Amoroso is lodged in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$20,000 straight cash bail on the Wilkes-Barre charges and 10 percent of \$10,000 bail on the Wilkes-Barre Township charges. He faces preliminary hearings on Jan. 27 and 28, both at 10 a.m. in Central Court.

1/10/2009

A man was charged Wednesday on allegations he passed a fraudulent prescription at a pharmacy in October, police said.

Edward G. Bath III, 25, of 57 Old Newport St., Nanticoke, was arraigned Friday on a felony charge of criminal attempt, according to court records. He is jailed for lack of producing \$5,000 straight bail.

Bath is accused of fraudulently obtaining 60 tablets of Vicodin ES by portraying to be a doctor and faxing in a prescription to Weiss Pharmacy in Nanticoke, police said.

According to an affidavit:

On Oct. 20, authorities went to Aspen Dental Office in Wilkes-Barre Township and spoke to an office manager who alleged Bath had passed a fraudulent prescription.

Authorities received a copy of the prescription receipt at the Weiss Pharmacy on Oct. 22.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Jan. 15 at Central Court.

1/9/2009

Man convicted of rape, kidnapping

Nanticoke's Joseph Craig Eckrote found guilty of crimes against former girlfriend.

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man accused of kidnapping and raping his ex-girlfriend was found guilty of the charges Wednesday by a Luzerne County jury.

Joseph Craig Eckrote, 48, was charged with kidnapping, rape, robbery of a motor vehicle, simple assault, two counts of terroristic threats and one count of summary harassment.

A jury deliberated for two and a half hours after testimony was completed.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. said Eckrote will be sentenced on the charges on April 1 at 9:30 a.m.

Eckrote was originally scheduled to enter a plea Monday but opted to stand trial instead. He was represented by public defender Mark Singer, who asked that the charges against Eckrote be dismissed. But Olszewski denied the motion.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts prosecuted the case.

According to state police at Wyoming, the woman told investigators Eckrote forced her into her car outside a Plymouth Township home on May 17.

The woman said she had returned home from work that day, when Eckrote emerged from the deck area of the house.

The woman said he charged at her, grabbed her with both hands and forced her into the car.

The woman said she began screaming "no" to create a disturbance and get some attention, and honked the car's horn.

She told police she reached into the console and removed a knife and tried to stab Eckrote in an effort to get away, but the knife got bent and Eckrote began driving away.

Eckrote told her that he was going to kill himself if she didn't drop the protection from abuse order against him and drove to the area of the Plymouth Flats near the Susquehanna River.

The woman said Eckrote told her to remove her shirt, pants and under garments and that he "wanted to have sex with her one more time before he killed himself."

The woman said she believed Eckrote was under the influence of some type of drug at the time. He then raped her.

Eckrote then tried to drive away with the woman, police said, but realized the vehicle was stuck in the mud. The woman said Eckrote then told her to start walking and make a right turn. She complied, she said, because she was afraid Eckrote would attack her again. She took her cell phone from her pocket and called 911.

Police said they searched the area for Eckrote but were unable to find him.

He surrendered in May at the office of District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke. Recently, a Luzerne County judge signed an order lowering Eckrote's bail from \$100,000 to \$30,000.

1/6/2009

Two people threatened, money and cell phones taken in Nanticoke armed robbery

emoody@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2051

Nanticoke police are looking for a man they believe used a gun to threaten two people and steal money and cell phones before locking them inside a garage at Mike's Service Center.

According to police, about 7:45 p.m. Monday, the suspect entered the service center at 277 Lower Broadway St., near the Nanticoke Bridge. A male attendant and female friend were the only people in the center.

The suspect, who was armed with a blue semi-automatic hand gun, ordered the attendant to hand over money, police said. The attendant handed over about \$150 in cash. The suspect told the victims they would not be hurt if they cooperated.

The suspect then stole their cell phones and ripped out the pay phone in front of the service area and the phone in the back room of the center before locking the two victims inside the garage, according to police.

He then fled on foot. The attendant said they did not see his feet pass in front of the garage when the suspect left, leading them to believe he headed toward Nanticoke and not toward the bridge, police said, but the actual direction was unknown.

The victims were able to open the garage from inside and went next door to Mac's Auto Co. to call police. No one was injured during the robbery, police said.

The suspect is described as a white male in his early 20s, about 6 feet tall or slightly shorter, with a thin build. He was wearing a white ski mask with a large eye opening, a black sweatshirt with the hood pulled up and black, baggy jeans. Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 or 911.

1/3/2009

City police are probing a burglary that occurred at Uni-Mart, 18 N. Market St., Friday morning, police said.

The suspect forced a rear door open and disabled the alarm and phone system, according to Nanticoke police. Once inside, the suspect forced open the ATM.

Police said an undetermined amount of cash was stolen from the ATM and elsewhere in the store. Also stolen were 45 cartons of cigarettes.

Video surveillance revealed the suspect entered the store around 3 a.m., police said.

Anyone with information about the burglary is urged to contact Nanticoke Police Department at 735-2200

2008

12/30/2008

Hunlock Creek man charged

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens'Voice

Nanticoke police arrested a Hunlock Creek man Sunday night for striking a woman at the Uni-Mart at 18 N. Market St. Talcott Ian Phillips, 26, was arraigned Monday before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker on simple assault and harassment charges.

According to the police criminal complaint, Phillips' girlfriend Lauren Brennan told police she argued with Phillips earlier at her home and she left as he became enraged. Brennan said she was going to Phillips' mother's home when she stopped at the Uni-Mart to put gasoline in her vehicle.

Phillips approached Brennan, argued with her and asked for help with his drug addiction. Brennan denied him any help and Phillips grabbed her by the arm, pulled her hair, struck her in her eye and scratched her hand.

A preliminary hearing for Phillips is scheduled for Jan. 7 at 10 a.m. in Luzerne County Central Court.

12/24/2008

A former Greater Nanticoke Area High School teacher accused of buying alcohol for five students over the summer is expected to plead guilty.

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

A former Greater Nanticoke Area High School teacher accused of buying alcohol for five students over the summer is expected to plead guilty or enter the accelerated rehabilitation disposition program that would erase the conviction after a probationary period, prosecutors said.

Edward Alessandrini, 35, who resigned his science teaching position while under investigation, was in Luzerne County Central Court to forward a charge of furnishing alcohol to minors to Luzerne County Court.

Prosecutors agreed to drop a charge of corruption of minors if the Swoyersville man would plead or enter the ARD program, which erases the criminal record of first-time offenders who stay out of trouble.

The case against Alessandrini was recently sent back to the magisterial level. He had forwarded his charges to county court in September. However, he learned the corruption charge was not eligible for ARD. Alessandrini will still be barred from teaching in the future, police said.

12/3/2008

Illegal hunting charges levied against man convicted of beating cop

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

A convicted cop-beater who is barred from possessing guns was arrested Monday in Nanticoke on firearms violations after the Pennsylvania Game Commission caught him illegally hunting, according to Nanticoke police.

James J. Stone, 49, was taken into custody around 4 p.m. in a wooded area near the Nanticoke bridge after he illegally baited and shot an 8-point buck, officials said.

When Nanticoke police arrived to assist Pennsylvania Game Commission officials, they discovered Stone was using a

stolen rifle and determined he is not allowed to possess guns because of a felony conviction for severely assaulting a Plymouth cop in 1993.

During a drunken rage, he beat and slashed veteran officer George Gocek Sr. in the face with a beer bottle, leaving Gocek with permanent debilitating injuries.

Nanticoke police on Monday charged Stone with illegally carrying a firearm as a convicted felon and receiving stolen property.

After his arrest, he was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Diana Malast of Plains Township, the on-duty magistrate.

Malast released Stone on \$5,000 unsecured bail, meaning he didn't go to jail and didn't have to post money.

Authorities were led to Stone of 218 Honey Pot St., Nanticoke, after receiving an anonymous letter he would be illegally baiting deer around the Nanticoke bridge, according to Daniel Figured, a law enforcement supervisor for the regional game commission office.

According to arrest papers, Stone claimed he didn't know the gun was stolen. He said he bought it from a stranger in the parking lot of a Plymouth convenience store.

He also said he didn't know he was prohibited from possessing a gun because of his convicted felon status.

Figured said it is illegal to use a food source to attract deer during hunting season, and Stone was using a food block of grain and molasses. In addition to the Nanticoke charges, the game commission charged Stone with unlawful taking of a deer and hunting with the use of bait, Figured said.

Stone's past case that prohibits him from possessing guns made headlines for years. He was convicted of aggravated assault and related charges for the vicious attack on Gocek, who was trying to arrest him for public drunkenness. Stone was later sentenced to four to eight years in state prison. After four years in jail, the state approved him for early release despite vehement objections from prosecutors.

When the state Board of Probation and Parole approved early release, then-District Attorney Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. called Stone "a menace to society" and warned he would "hold the board personally and professionally responsible" if the early release leads to any more acts of violence.

Stone has been free since Aug. 10, 1998. Since then, he has not been arrested criminally in Pennsylvania.

In 2003, the game commission charged Stone with unlawful hunting. Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke found him guilty and he was fined \$547, court records show.

12/2/2008

A Wilkes-Barre man wanted since October on allegations he fled from police while driving a stolen vehicle was arraigned on Monday.

Jerome James Sharr, 18, of Rees Street, was charged with receiving stolen property, fleeing or attempting to elude police, flight to avoid apprehension, reckless endangerment, accidents involving damage to attended vehicle, accidents involving damage to unattended vehicle and six traffic offenses. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

Police allege Sharr was driving a 2004 Cadillac Deville when he was pursued through several municipalities on Oct. 21. Police said the Cadillac was reported stolen to Larksville police on Oct. 20.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police attempted to stop Sharr when he was observed exiting a parking lot on Main Street. Sharr sped onto the Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township and state Route 29 into Sugar Notch before entering Interstate 81 in Ashley. Sharr continued onto Business Route 309 in Wilkes-Barre Township and turned onto Coal Street in Wilkes-Barre. Police pursued Sharr onto South Hancock Street until he abandoned the vehicle when he struck a curb at East Market Street. Sharr ran away from the vehicle and eluded capture, the complaint says.

A 16-year-old female inside the vehicle was unharmed, police said.

Police said during the pursuit, Sharr struck a guide rail and a Wilkes-Barre police cruiser and passed numerous vehicles and failed to stop at red traffic signals and stop signs.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 10 in Central Court.

12/2/2008

A Hanover Township man recently sentenced to five to 12 years in state prison on attempted burglary charges asked a judge Monday to reduce his sentence and hold a new trial.

Citizens' Voice

Gary S. Myers, 47, was sentenced on Nov. 21 on charges of criminal conspiracy to commit burglary and resisting arrest. Myers' attorney, Michael Senape, said in court papers filed Monday that Myers' sentence should be reduced to 2 ? to 4 years in prison because Myers has five minor children to care for and "has not been arrested and/or charged with any crimes for several years prior to the charges involved in this matter."

Senape also asked that a new trial be held for Myers, stating that the court "erred in denying (Myers') request for continuance which was made via an oral motion by (Senape) prior to the empanelling and swearing in of the jury in this matter." The filing also asks the court to address issues and arguments Senape might have had during the swearing in of the jury.

According to arrest records, Myers planned to rob Reilly Finishing Technologies, Nanticoke, because he was "in need of money for past-due child support and legal problems, as well as to finance a move to somewhere in Noxen," court papers say. Police said Myers conspired with three others to steal raw nickel from the business.

11/26/2008

Woman free for 8 hours back in jail

elewis@timesleader.com

Less than eight hours after being released from the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, an 18-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly stealing a vehicle on Monday night.

Sarah Elizabeth Wargo, of South Hanover Street, Nanticoke, was charged Tuesday morning with receiving stolen property, theft and driving without a license.

Police allege in arrest records that Wargo drove away in a 1997 Ford Escort that was idling in the Weis Market parking lot around 7:45 p.m. and crashed into a tree in Hanover Township.

She was jailed at the county correctional facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

Earlier Monday, Wargo appeared for a preliminary hearing in Central Court on allegations she threatened a clerk at the Turkey Hill, Hazle Avenue, Wilkes-Barre, with a box cutter during a robbery on Nov. 15, according to arrest and court records.

Wilkes-Barre police charged Wargo with robbery, aggravated harassment by prisoner, possession of a weapon, terroristic threats and criminal mischief. She was held at the county correctional facility for lack of \$50,000 bail in connection with the robbery, but a district judge modified her bail, allowing her to be released from jail at about noon Monday, court records say.

After her arrest by Nanticoke police, according to court records, Wargo's bail that was modified Monday morning was re-established at \$500,000.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police:

Martin Buczek, 41, told police he drove his girlfriend, Wargo, to Weis Markets. Buczek left his car idling in the parking lot as he entered the store.

When Buczek exited the store, he told police, Wargo drove away in his vehicle, according to the criminal complaint.

Buczek walked to Wargo's mother's house on East Broad Street, Nanticoke, where he called 911.

While he was at the house, Wargo called her mother to say she crashed into a tree, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing on the charges filed by Nanticoke police is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 4 in Central Court.

Wilkes-Barre police allege Wargo entered the Turkey Hill with a plastic bag concealing her face and threatened a clerk with a box cutter while demanding money on Nov. 15, according to arrest records.

Wargo ran out of the store and attempted to ride away on a bicycle.

After she was captured, police said in arrest records, Wargo screamed profanities and threatened to harm officers.

A preliminary hearing on the charges filed by Wilkes-Barre police was postponed from Monday to Dec. 22.

11/26/2008

A Nanticoke man charged by Hanover Township police with stabbing a man waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Tuesday.

William M. Conway, 23, of Railroad Street, waived two counts of simple assault, and one count each of aggravated assault and recklessly endangering another person to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Prosecutors withdrew a second count of aggravated assault against Conway.

Township police charged Conway with stabbing Muadhhdhin Sharif, 25, during a party at an apartment in Hanover

Village on Nov. 9, according to the criminal complaint.

11/26/2008

A man charged by Nanticoke police with assaulting his brother with a knife waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Tuesday.

Mark Ulatowski, 40, of East Church Street, Nanticoke, waived a single count of simple assault to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Prosecutors withdrew charges of terroristic threats, harassment and a second count of simple assault against Ulatowski. Nanticoke police claim Ulatowski threatened his brother, Robert Shuma Jr., 48, with a knife during a dispute on Nov. 16, according to the criminal complaint.

11/22/2008

W. Wyoming man gets 5-12 years

jmarckini@timesleader.com

A West Wyoming man was sentenced Friday to five to 12 years in state prison for his role in a Nanticoke burglary in April 2007.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. sentenced Gary S. Myers, 47, of 718 W. Eighth St., on criminal conspiracy to commit burglary and resisting arrest, according to court records.

A jury found Myers guilty last month for the burglary at Reilly Finishing Technologies on April 26, 2007.

Police said Myers conspired to burglarize the nickel coating business with two others, his girlfriend, Laurie Kautter, 38, of 718 W. Eighth St., West Wyoming, and Christopher Hamlett, 20, of 159 Sugar Hollow Road, Tunkhannock.

An employee of the business told Nanticoke police he was contacted by Myers who asked him to help burglarize the place, a criminal complaint states. Police were waiting inside the building during the break-in attempt.

Myers told the worker he wanted to steel raw nickel because he needed money for a new home, past due child support and legal problems.

Kautter and Hamlett were both sentenced in April, court records show.

Judge Mark A. Ciavarella sentenced Kautter to 12 months probation on two counts of criminal conspiracy to commit theft by unlawful taking. Two other felony charges were withdrawn during her guilty plea on April 9.

Hamlett was sentenced by Judge Patrick J. Toole to six to 18 months to the county correctional facility on charges of criminal conspiracy and criminal trespassing charges on April 21.

11/20/2008

Nanticoke police seek fraud suspects

Times Leader

Police are searching for two men suspected of credit-card fraud at CVS Pharmacy and Weis Market on Wednesday.

Police described one of the suspects as a light-skinned black or Hispanic man between 25 and 35 years old, approximately 6 feet tall and weighing about 180 pounds. The other is described as a black male, 30 to 40 years old, approximately 6 feet tall, weighing about 250 pounds.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

11/19/2008

Third person charged with torturing 15-year-old in Wilkes-Barre 12:07 p.m.

By Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

A third person has been charged in connection with the beating and torture of a 15-year-old boy in August at 131 N. Meade St. in Wilkes-Barre.

Daniel "Max" Davenport was arraigned this morning on charges of aggravated assault, false imprisonment, and simple assault.

Police say Davenport, 24, of 924 Essex Court, West Hempstead, N.Y., was a member of the Long Island Boys, a notoriously dangerous street gang that was operating out of Sherman Hills Apartments and linked to a murder, murder

plots, and the torture of the teenager.

Other gang members Edward Enriquez, 21, and Rufus Evans, 21, were charged shortly after the boy was found beaten, cut, burned and imprisoned in the bathroom of an apartment on Aug. 9.

Details of the torture case came to light when Attorney General Tom Corbett announced the arrest of 27 suspects in Operation Heavyweight last month.

Investigators said the gang was competing for the illegal drug trade at Sherman Hills and were looking to recruit dealers to grow their business

Arrest papers say the gang leaders wanted minors to be part of the group because they could force them to commit crimes and because juveniles face less consequences if caught.

The victim told police he just moved to the area from North Carolina, and "admired" the Sherman Hills drug dealers because they "walked around like celebrities." Soon, the teen would experience the gang's wrath.

According to police:

For his initiation, the teenager was told he "had to be jumped, prove loyalty to the gang, and kill someone." He was given a gun and told of the target to kill. But then, he made the gang mad over missing money and several members tortured him. They sliced him with hot butcher knives and scissors while he was tied to a chair. They punched and kicked him, and then poured cleaning solvents on the wounds to make him suffer.

Davenport had already been jailed on charges of participating in a corrupt organization, criminal conspiracy to deliver heroin, and criminal use of a communications facility.

Police said locally he had lived on East Noble Street in Nanticoke.

11/18/2008

A man was charged by police on Monday on allegations he threatened his brother with a knife.

Mark Ulatowski, 40, of East Church Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of simple assault and one count each of terroristic threats and harassment. He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

Robert Shuma Jr., 48, told police Ulatowski threatened him with a knife during an argument on Sunday, according to the criminal complaint. Police said the brothers were cooking chicken wings and argued about cleaning up.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 25 in Central Court.

11/18/2008

A Nanticoke man was arrested by police on allegations he smashed a large window at the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center on Hazle Avenue early Monday morning.

Michael A Graham, 46, of North Mill Street, was charged with criminal trespass and criminal mischief and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$2,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police investigated a loud noise complaint in the area of Hazle Avenue and Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and located Graham in the middle of the intersection at about 2 a.m. Monday.

Police said Graham was bleeding from his hand.

Witnesses told police they observed Graham walking away from the Salvation Army, where an 8-by-8-foot window was smashed, the complaint says.

Police said they found blood inside the building, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 25 in Central Court.

11/18/2008

Man jailed on charges he assaulted girlfriend

Citizens' Voice

A man was arrested and jailed Sunday night for beating his girlfriend at the Apollo Circle apartments in Nanticoke, city police say.

Jason M. Henicheck, 30, is charged with simple assault and harassment.

According to police, Henicheck and his girlfriend were arguing and he wanted to take their 2-year-old daughter with him from the residence, 242 Apollo Circle.

The girlfriend said an intoxicated Henicheck pushed her into a fan, a banister and a wall and left the home with the

daughter.

By the time police arrived, he returned to the home, where he was arrested, police said.

Henicheck was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, where he remained Monday night in lieu of \$2,500 bail.

11/16/2008

A woman who tried to rob a convenience store left with only a candy bar.

Times Leader

Sarah Wargo, 18, of Nanticoke, is accused of walking into the Turkey Hill and robbing the place on Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and Hazle Avenue around 2 p.m. Saturday, according to Wilkes-Barre police Lt. Steve Olshefski.

Wargo allegedly waived around a box cutter while inside the store and announced she was going to rob the place, Olshefski said.

After knocking several items off shelves, police said Wargo fled with a candy bar.

Police were able to locate Wargo within minutes, Olshefski said.

Wargo will be charged with robbery, possessing instruments of crime, terroristic threats and criminal mischief, Olshefski said. She also will be charged with aggravated harassment by a prisoner for allegedly spitting on an officer while in a holding cell at police headquarters.

There were no injuries in the robbery, but Wargo had to be taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for treatment of a medical condition, Olshefski said.

Wargo was taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility for an overnight arraignment, Olshefski said.

A preliminary hearing has not yet been scheduled pending an arraignment.

11/12/2008

A 21-year-old Nanticoke man was recently sentenced to at least six months in county jail for his role in a robbery spree last year.

Raymond Thomas Rittenhouse, of West Ridge Street, was sentenced to six to 12 months in county prison, followed by one-year probation. In May, Rittenhouse pleaded guilty to criminal attempt to commit robbery; criminal conspiracy to commit robbery, theft by unlawful taking and another theft charge before Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. Rittenhouse was sentenced by Olszewski on Oct. 31.

According to court records, on Oct. 15, 2007, James Franco and Rittenhouse were arrested on robbery charges for an attempted purse snatching from an elderly woman in Nanticoke. Later that same day, police said, Franco and Rittenhouse attempted to steal a purse from a woman in the parking lot of Gerrity's Supermarket on the Sans Souci Parkway.

Olszewski ordered Rittenhouse to pay more than \$300 in restitution.

11/11/2008

Nanticoke man jailed over stabbing

William Michael Conway faces 5 charges. Muadhdhin Sharif treated for abdomen injury.

elewis@timesleader.com

Township police allege a spilled drink among uninvited guests at a party led to a stabbing at Hanover Village early Sunday morning.

Police said William Michael Conway, 23, of Railroad Street, Nanticoke, got in a fight and stabbed Muadhdhin Sharif, 25, in the abdomen with a knife.

Conway and his friends sped away in a vehicle that was later observed by police driving in the area, according to police. Police followed the vehicle until it stopped in Ashley, where Conway was captured.

A folding knife was found inside the vehicle, police said.

Conway was charged with two counts each of aggravated assault and simple assault, and a single count of recklessly endangering another person. He was arraigned before District Judge Joseph Halesy in Hanover Township and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

Sharif was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, Plains Township, where he was treated for his injury, police said.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Sgt. Dean Stair:

Police were summoned to an apartment in the 1000 block of Hanover Village at about 1:40 a.m. Sunday for a report of a stabbing. There, police found Sharif holding a rag to his abdomen. Sharif told police Conway stabbed him during a fight, according to the criminal complaint.

Sharif told police he was in a rear bedroom and heard a loud dispute in the living room. He approached Conway and told Conway and his friends to leave.

Sharif claimed he escorted Conway outside the apartment when Conway smashed a liquor bottle on the ground. When Sharif confronted Conway about the smashed bottle, he claimed Conway pulled out a knife and stabbed him, the criminal complaint says.

Witnesses told police Conway and his friends sped away in a blue, four-door vehicle. Police were unsuccessful in locating the vehicle, but after a few minutes, it was spotted in the area. Police followed the vehicle until it stopped on Manhattan Street in Ashley, where Conway was arrested.

A passenger in Conway's vehicle, Daniel Wildes, told police a woman invited them to the party. An argument erupted when Conway spilled a drink and was accused of talking to Sharif's girlfriend, according to the criminal complaint. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 18 in Central Court.

11/6/2008

Times Leader

A woman was charged by police on Wednesday on allegations she assaulted a man with a cooking pot.

Allyshia Buckingham, 22, of Apollo Circle, was charged with simple assault and harassment. She was released on \$2,500 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Nicholas Suydam told police he went to a residence in Apollo Circle to gather clothing for a child he was babysitting when Buckingham struck him in the face with a cooking pot at about 12:15 a.m. Wednesday.

Buckingham told police she believed Suydam was attempting to break into the apartment, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 13 in Central Court.

11/6/2008

Cause of greenhouse fire undetermined

Times Leader

The cause of an early morning blaze that broke out at Varsity Greenhouses could not be determined, a fire marshal ruled Wednesday.

Firefighters responded around 2:30 a.m. to a reported structure fire at 695 E. Main St., according to Nanticoke Fire Chief Mike Bohan. The building was fully involved upon firefighters' arrival, he said.

A passerby in the area called 911 to report the fire, Bohan said. Firefighters were able to contain the fire shortly after. The building was destroyed.

There were no injuries and no one was inside the building, Bohan said

10/28/2008

A woman was charged by police on Monday with assaulting her boyfriend with glass and threatening to stab him with a knife.

Danielle Sangemino, 28, of East Main Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault and harassment. She was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were dispatched to the couple's residence at about 3:30 a.m. Monday for a dispute. William Park told police he was arguing with Sangemino at a tavern and that the argument continued after they arrived home. He said Sangemino threw glass from a picture frame that caused a minor injury to his abdomen, the criminal complaint says.

Park further claimed, the criminal complaint says, Sangemino threatened to stab him with a butter knife.

Sangemino told police Park refused to allow her to enter the residence, and that Park grabbed her hair, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 5 in Central Court.

10/22/2008

A chase that started in Nanticoke came to an abrupt end after police say a driver of a stolen vehicle crashed into a city police cruiser in Wilkes-Barre on Tuesday night.

The driver took off on foot, but the passenger in the vehicle was arrested at the scene, said Wilkes-Barre police Lt. Steve Olshefski.

Police in Wilkes-Barre first spotted the stolen vehicle on Coal Street and a pursuit ensued, he said.

The chase went on for a short time, but ended after the vehicle struck the cruiser, and then crashed into a curb on South Hancock and East Market streets, where the driver fled on foot, Olshefski said.

Police set up a perimeter in the area, but could not locate the driver.

Officer Erika Oswald, who was driving the police car, was not injured, Olshefski said. The police cruiser sustained minor damage.

The passenger, a 16-year-old girl from Nanticoke, was taken into custody at the crash scene, according to Nanticoke Capt. Detective William Shultz. The driver, an 18-year-old man from Wilkes-Barre, fled. Police have not arrested the driver as of late Tuesday night, Shultz said.

The vehicle, a 2004 Cadillac, was stolen in Larksville.

The chase started in Nanticoke, Shultz said. Nanticoke police first located the vehicle at Lacey's Catering parking lot, 444 E. Main St., and pursued the vehicle down Main Street to South Walnut Street to East Broad Street to a one-way street, Christian Street.

The vehicle went back onto Main Street, and then headed on San Souci Parkway to Route 29 and then on Interstate 81, getting off at the Route 309 exit in Wilkes-Barre Township.

10/15/2008

Breaking News: Nanticoke police seek information on armed robbery suspect 12:32 p.m.

By Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police are investigating an armed robbery that occurred early this morning at the Uni-Mart store at 61 E. Main St., and say the suspect may have been driving an older Ford Taurus with a cracked windshield.

The suspect walked in the store around 12:15 p.m., told the clerk he had a gun and ordered her to give him cash, police say.

A witness observed the suspect flee and get into a Ford Taurus, which was parked in an alley behind Nardozzo's Pizza. The vehicle eventually turned left onto South Walnut Street, the witness said.

The suspect has a thin build, is about 5'8" to 6", and has a tattoo on his right wrist. He was wearing a baseball hat, a jacket, a collared shirt, and a bag over his shoulder.

A similar robbery occurred later at a Wilkes-Barre Turkey Hill, and investigators are trying to determine if there is a connection.

Anyone with information should contact Nanticoke police at **735-2200**.

10/8/2008

Man injured in fight outside Nanticoke bar

Published: Wednesday, October 8, 2008 9:03 AM EDT

Nanticoke police are seeking information regarding a fight that occurred outside the Prospect Cafe in Nanticoke on Monday night.

Police were called to a report of several people, male and female, fighting around 9:45 p.m. at the 23 S. Prospect St. bar. Officers learned a white van fled the area.

A 49-year-old man was hospitalized for injuries sustained in the brawl.

Those with information should call Nanticoke police at 735-2200, ext. 205.

10/8/2008

Man, jealous of brother's incarceration, heads to prison

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke police arrested a man Monday night for assaulting his brother — apparently because he was jealous his brother had been in prison and he had not, according to city police.

Dessie R. Kinney got his wish and was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on charges of simple assault, harassment and illegal possession and misbranding of a prescription pill, police say.

Police were called to 636 S. Walnut St. around 9:45 p.m. for a report of Kinney fighting with his brother, Jessie.

The victim said Kinney starting fighting with him while they were watching a movie about prison. The victim had been in prison before and told police his brother was jealous.

Kinney caused injuries to his brother's forehead, head and arm, police said.

During the investigation, police say they found Kinney illegally in possession of an Oxycodone tablet wrapped in a cellophane cigarette wrapper.

He was jailed in lieu of \$2,000 cash bail.

10/3/2008

Serial robber sentenced to 2 to 4 years

msisak@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2061

James Franco mugged an elderly woman in Nanticoke and attempted to steal a purse from another woman in Hanover Township on the same day last October. He held a knife to a clerk's back as he robbed a convenience store in Nanticoke in May and broke into a home in Hanover Township to steal video games and DVDs in June.

Franco, 30, of Hanover Township, said he committed the crimes to finance an addiction to heroin. The addiction, Franco's attorney Nicole Bednarek said, developed while he served a 10-year term in a New Jersey state prison on similar charges.

Franco pleaded guilty Thursday to the convenience store robbery and the home invasion, following a March 6 guilty plea on the mugging and purse snatching.

Luzerne County Court President Judge Mark A. Ciavarella Jr. sentenced Franco to a combined two years to four years in state prison for all four crimes and requested Franco be placed in a facility where he can receive treatment for his drug addiction and related psychological condition.

"He's definitely going to get some help," Bednarek said. "He's never had any treatment before while he was in state prison. He's hoping to get his life straightened out."

Franco still faces charges in another Hanover Township break-in and charges including felony robbery and robbery of a motor vehicle in an alleged knife-point attack on a taxi cab driver on June 25. Franco is awaiting trial on both incidents, Bednarek said.

Franco mugged a woman outside the Prospect Cafe in Nanticoke on Oct. 15, 2007, prosecutors said. The same day, Franco participated in a purse-snatching at Gerrity's Market in Hanover Township.

On May 14, Franco robbed a Uni-Mart in Nanticoke and held a knife to the clerk's back. A month later, Franco broke into a home on Stanley Street in Hanover Township and stole video games and DVDs. Franco was free on bail when he allegedly attacked the taxi cab driver, prosecutors said.

"Hopefully now he is realizing the consequences of his actions," Bednarek said.

Bob Kalinowski, staff writer, contributed to this report.

10/1/2008

Charges against Nanticoke man in theft, arson go to court

Citizens' Voice

Charges against a 24-year-old Nanticoke native who allegedly stole \$43,000 from Rolling Pines Golf Course in Berwick and set a fire to cover the theft were forwarded to Columbia County Court after a preliminary hearing Tuesday morning. Jamie Danko, of Lattimer, appeared before Magisterial District Judge Richard Cashman in Berwick on charges of theft, receiving stolen property, tampering with records, arson and criminal trespass.

Danko, a former standout golfer for Greater Nanticoke Area High School, worked at Rolling Pines as the course's golf pro/general manager. Danko allegedly stole money from membership fees, tournaments and rentals while employed at the golf course, according to reports. He is also accused of using company funds, rather than his own, to stock the pro-shop, reports said.

Danko was arrested in August.

9/19/2008

LCCC dean charged with stealing school funds

msisak@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2061

Peter Paul Moses, the dean in charge of several departments at Luzerne County Community College, including the cafeteria, is accused of stealing more than \$17,000 in cash deposits and two laptop computers from the institution. Moses, 57, of Wilkes-Barre, was arrested Thursday and charged with felony counts of theft by unlawful taking and theft by failure to make required disposition of funds; and four misdemeanors: two counts of theft by unlawful taking and two counts of receiving stolen property. If convicted, he could face up to 34 years in prison and a maximum \$70,000 fine. According to prosecutors, Moses stole more than a dozen cash deposits between September 2005 and April 2007 and kept two laptop computers, worth \$1,598, for personal use after they had been purchased for the college's Educational Conference Center.

"I am outraged and dismayed that this occurred at our college," Luzerne County Community College President Thomas P. Leary said in a statement.

Moses, who is on a leave of absence from the college, was arraigned Thursday morning before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker and released on \$20,000 unsecured bail.

Whittaker scheduled Moses to appear at a preliminary hearing at Central Court in Wilkes-Barre on Sept. 25, but Moses' attorney, William Ruzzo, said that proceeding could be postponed due to a scheduling conflict.

Ruzzo, a close friend of Moses' for more than 30 years, said the charges were hard to fathom.

"It would be a great surprise to me if Peter stole anything," Ruzzo said after the arraignment.

Robert Linskey, who has served as the college's director of accounts and finance since April 2006, began questioning missing cafeteria funds shortly after he was hired, prosecutors said.

Linskey noticed cafeteria deposits for April 18, 2006 and April 19, 2006 were not received by his office and no "cash out" receipts had been turned in, arousing his suspicion that the money was stolen. Moses was unable to provide an explanation for the missing money, prosecutors said.

Cash register receipts from the cafeteria were backed up on a computer system located in an office adjacent to the cafeteria that Moses often used as a smoking room. Shortly after Linskey asked Moses about the missing April 2006 funds, Linskey discovered the computer missing from the office.

"There were only two cords left of that computer," Linskey told investigators.

Cafeteria manager Sheldon Owens used a calendar to note each day's cash deposits and noticed money disappeared only when Moses personally handled it, prosecutors said.

College officials handled the investigation internally for nearly two years, waiting until after Moses returned \$1,200 of the missing funds last February to contact police, Luzerne County District Attorney Jackie Musto Carroll said.

"The delay in reporting to law enforcement did hamper the investigation, but despite that we were able to end up with the same result that undoubtedly we believe Mr. Moses stole the money from the college," Detective Kevin Grevera of the Nanticoke City Police said.

The college has instituted new safeguards to prevent a future theft, Leary said.

All deposits are now directed to Linskey's office, recorded, picked up by Brinks security and deposited at Wachovia Bank and reconciled. Bank statements are reviewed later for accuracy, Linskey told investigators.

"It's becoming increasingly clear the people of Luzerne County are not going to tolerate white-collar crimes," Musto Carroll said. "It's not enough to pay back this money. These are crimes and these individuals must be punished."

9/19/2008

A former Greater Nanticoke Area School District teacher accused by state police at Wyoming of supplying alcohol to several teens waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Wednesday, according to court records.

Edward Alessandrini, 35, of Chapel Street, waived five counts each of corruption of minors and furnishing alcohol to minors to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas. State police charged Alessandrini with furnishing beer to five teen girls at a Lehman Township residence on July 16, according to the criminal complaint. Alessandrini resigned from the school district in July.

9/19/2008

A Luzerne County jury recently acquitted a Nanticoke woman of harassing two minority juveniles at a bus stop

in March.

Mary Louise Warner, 47, of Apollo Circle, was charged by Nanticoke police after a mother complained Warner was harassing her two daughters.

After a trial before Court of Common Pleas Judge Chester Muroski on Sept. 5, a jury acquitted Warner of ethnic intimidation.

Warner was found guilty of a summary charge of harassment, and fined \$100. Attorney Mark Singer represented Warner. Assistant District Attorney Ed Olexa prosecuted.

9/13/2008

A woman faces drug sale charges after authorities found several bags of heroin inside of a motel room around 5:30 p.m. Thursday, state police said.

Erica Neyhard, 24, of Nanticoke, was charged with drug sale and manufacturing, according to state police at Wyoming. She was observed making several drug transactions from her vehicle in the Nanticoke and Hanover Township areas, police said.

Neyhard was found to be in possession of several bags of suspected heroin during a traffic stop on Route 11, police said. Through the investigation it was learned that Neyhard was staying at Room 2 in Casino Motel in Bear Creek Township. A search of the motel room was conducted by the state police Vice/Narcotic Unit and resulted in the seizure of 940 bags of suspected heroin and \$2,450 cash, police said.

Neyhard was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker, Nanticoke, and remanded to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of bail.

9/12/2008

Two people charged by Nanticoke police with allegedly performing lewd acts inside the police department's jail cell waived their right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Monday.

Times Leader

Deborah Kelber, 44, of Hazleton, and James Edward Gordon, 27, of Nanticoke, separately waived three counts each of indecent exposure and open lewdness to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Nanticoke police charged the two with performing lewd acts on each other while they were jailed in separate cells at the police department on Aug. 9, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said Kelber and Gordon were placed in separate cells on public drunkenness charges, according to arrest and court records.

9/9/2008

Three men pleaded guilty Monday to breaking into a Nanticoke home and threatening two women with pellet guns.

Times Leader

Jerome Tucker, 21, Michael Ewell, 20, with last known addresses of Apollo Circle, Nanticoke, and Jamil Tucker, 22, of Kingston, pleaded guilty to reckless endangerment, terroristic threats and possession of instruments of crime.

Jerome Tucker and Ewell were both sentenced to 12 months probation on the charges by Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr.

Olszewski said he will sentence Jamil Tucker on the charges on Oct. 14 after a pre-sentence investigation is conducted. The judge said that each man could have faced a minimum of six years in jail if sentences were run consecutively.

Charges of burglary, stalking and criminal trespassing were dropped.

According to arrest records, police charged the three men, and Eric Tucker, 20, with a last known address in Kingston, after they forced their way into a Church Street home on April 15 and threatened two women with pellet guns.

Police said Jerome Tucker wanted to fight a man who resided at the home, and began yelling, "You're going to get it," when he entered the residence.

Eric Tucker was sentenced in July to six months probation on criminal conspiracy charges for his role in the break-in.

8/19/2008

Cops: Ex-teacher gave teens beer

Former Greater Nanticoke teacher allegedly bought beer for girls mourning death of recent grad.

elewis@timesleader.com

A former science teacher at Greater Nanticoke Area gave beer to five teen girls during a gathering of people who were mourning the loss of a recent high school graduate, state police at Wyoming said.

Edward Alessandrini, 35, of Swoyersville, is charged with five counts each of corruption of minors and furnishing alcohol to minors. The charges were filed by state police at Wyoming Trooper Lisa Brogan with District Judge James E. Tupper in Trucksville on Monday.

Alessandrini taught environmental science at the high school and was an assistant wrestling coach. His name has been omitted from the school district's Web site.

Superintendent Anthony Perrone and school board President Jeff Kozlofski didn't return messages seeking comment on Monday.

Police said Alessandrini supplied beer to three 18-year-old and two 16-year-old girls. The teens have not been charged, according to court records.

According to the criminal complaint:

Perrone told police on July 28 that he received complaints from parents who viewed on the Internet a picture showing Alessandrini posing with five teen girls. Perrone said he was given the picture by Kozlofski and was concerned that Alessandrini supplied the teens with alcohol.

Police learned that Alessandrini and the girls gathered to mourn the loss of Paul Drozdowski, a 2008 Greater Nanticoke Area graduate, at a Lake Silkworth cottage on July 16.

Alessandrini was at the cottage but left to buy beer at the Outpost Bar in Lake Silkworth, the criminal complaint says.

Police said Alessandrini returned to the cottage and provided the beer to the girls.

The cottage's owner, Jason Bienkowski, told police he invited eight people to his cottage and didn't know Alessandrini or the girls. After he saw a young girl holding a beer, he asked everyone to leave.

Bienkowski told police he witnessed several girls, according to the criminal complaint, get into Alessandrini's vehicle before driving away.

One of the 18-year-old women told police she went with Alessandrini when he purchased beer at the bar. She admitted to drinking beer with Alessandrini at the cottage, and that the two 16-year-olds drove away with Alessandrini when they left the cottage, the criminal complaint says.

She claimed they met again at a residence in the Honey Pot section of Nanticoke, the criminal complaint says, where a party was being held.

A preliminary hearing will be scheduled in Central Court.

8/16/2008

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Thursday to two to four years in county prison on charges he sold drugs to police informant in March of 2007.

Christopher A. Klesmer, 20, of Mosier Street, was sentenced by Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Chester Muroski on charges of possession with intent to deliver. Klesmer pleaded guilty to the charges in June.

According to arrest papers, Klesmer sold suspected marijuana to a police informant on several different occasions.

Muroski ordered Klesmer to pay more than \$2,200 in restitution and costs. Klesmer will receive five days credit for time already served in prison.

Muroski said Klesmer is eligible for work and school release.

8/16/2008

A woman was charged Thursday after police said she assaulted her mother at their West Broad Street home.

Sherry Christine Turner, 31, was charged with simple assault and harassment. She was released on her own recognizance.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were called to the home just after midnight Thursday for a physical dispute involving Turner and her mother, Theresa Chesney.

Chesney told police, the criminal complaint says, that Turner choked her.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 21 in Central Court.

8/13/2008

A 33-year-old Nanticoke man was charged by township police with setting his 2004 Ford Mustang on fire on Monday, according to arrest records.

Times Leader

William Ertz, of East Grant Street, was charged with three counts of arson. He was arraigned by District Judge Joseph Halesey in Hanover Township and released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint, township firefighters responded to a vehicle fire on Hanover Street at about 7:30 a.m.

Assistant Fire Chief Jeffrey Tudgay contacted state police deputy fire marshal Ron Jarocho to conduct an investigation to determine how the fire started.

Jarocho determined that the fire was intentionally set on the driver's seat, the criminal complaint says.

Police questioned Ertz who admitted, the criminal complaint says, that he poured paint thinner on the driver's seat and then ignited it with a lighter.

8/13/2008

LCCC probe continuing

Law enforcement report on \$1,200 missing in January to be ready in four weeks.

slong@timesleader.com

A report regarding the investigation of missing money earlier this year from Luzerne County Community College is being compiled by local law enforcement agencies, LCCC President Tom Leary said Tuesday.

Officials expect the report to be completed in about four weeks.

Luzerne County Community College Board of Trustees were updated about the case during an executive session meeting held before just prior to Tuesday's board meeting at the campus' Educational Conference Center.

In January it was discovered that \$1,200 was missing from LCCC's cafeteria. At the time college officials said the money was misplaced. The money was later recovered.

College officials spent a month conducting their own internal investigation to make sure they had the correct facts before contacting the Nanticoke Police Department.

In February Leary said there was a change in administrative policy to ensure this type of incident would not occur again. Nanticoke Police Detective Kevin Grevera began investigating the incident in February when college officials revealed there were potential financial improprieties.

"We can't comment on that while it's being investigated," Grevera said.

Luzerne County District Attorney Jackie Musto Carroll confirmed the case was still active, but she could not say how much longer the investigation will continue.

Dr. Agapito Lopez, one of the newest board members, was not too familiar with the case until receiving Tuesday's update.

But as a board member, he said he wants to do ensure that whoever is responsible for taking or misplacing of the money is punished appropriately.

"When someone is accused we need to make sure they are not part of the college any longer," Lopez said.

Law enforcement authorities investigating the case have not released the names of any suspects. No one has been arrested in conjunction with the case.

Lopez also wants to review the college's administrative policies to see if additional precautions can be utilized to prevent money from being mishandled.

The board also unanimously approved a code of conduct policy Tuesday night that board member Mahmoud Fahmy developed and presented.

7/31/2008

Michael Zagora, 36, of West Green Street, was charged Wednesday with assaulting his girlfriend, according to the criminal complaint. He faces charges of simple assault and harassment.

Times Leader

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were investigating a dispute involving Zagora and Linda Spence at their shared residence at about 11 p.m.

Tuesday. Police said Spence claimed Zagora struck her in the face, the criminal complaint says. Police said Spence suffered facial injuries. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 7 in Central Court.

7/30/2008

Charges against alleged serial robber sent to court

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

A former Posten Taxi driver took the witness stand Tuesday to describe the terrifying night when alleged serial robber James Franco hopped in his cab and pulled a knife.

“He stuck the knife to my throat and said, ‘Put the car in drive and let’s go,’” recalled former cabbie Patrick Sharp. “He said he was going to puncture my windpipe if I didn’t do everything he said.”

Sharp detailed the wild and scary chain of events that included Franco ruffling through his pockets for money and Sharp’s dramatic escape from Franco on South Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre. He also highlighted the hair-raising moments when Franco commandeered his vehicle and tried to mow him down with the taxi on South Main Street. The taxi robbery was just one of three cases Franco had scheduled in Central Court on Tuesday — the others included the burglary of a Stanley Street, Hanover Township, residence and the subsequent burglary of his accomplice’s house. All cases were forwarded to Luzerne County court after two minor charges were dropped.

Prosecutors called Franco a “clear and present danger to the citizens of Luzerne County” after the arrest in the taxi heist case on June 25. It was the ex-con’s sixth local arrest on serious charges since October when the 30-year-old moved here after spending a decade in New Jersey prisons for multiple burglaries and robberies.

After each arrest, local magisterial district judges gave Franco minimal or no bail, allowing him to be released from prison by posting little or no money.

After being bailed out in connection with the mugging of a senior citizen in Nanticoke on a public street, a purse snatching at a Hanover Township grocery store parking lot and an armed robbery of a Nanticoke convenience store, Franco allegedly helped commit a burglary of 38 Stanley St. in Hanover Township.

Police alleged Franco and accomplice Mark DeLong stole various electronics, a weight-lifting set and a shotgun totaling \$13,600 from the home, whose occupants Neil Splendido and Dejah Vaughn were out of town at a hospital following complications after the birth of their child.

“What wasn’t stolen was broken,” Splendido testified Tuesday. “We were just devastated.”

DeLong and his girlfriend, Danielle Bergamino, live in the other side of the double-block. Bergamino was supposed to take care of Splendido’s dogs on an enclosed porch, but did not have a key to get inside the rest of the home, Splendido said. Police say the suspects kicked open the door.

Days after Franco burglarized Splendido’s home, police say he was caught trying to burglarize DeLong’s home. Franco’s next court date was scheduled for Oct. 3 at 9:30 a.m. He remains jailed in lieu of \$150,000 cash bail.

7/24/2008

Three violated Megan’s Law, police say

By jmarckini@timesleader.com

Two convicted sex offenders found living in Nanticoke were arraigned Tuesday for failure to register their current addresses to comply with Megan’s Law, according to court records.

A third man also was charged recently with failing to register as a sex offender.

Ronald Avery, 50, of 289 E. Union St., and Michael Robert Backley, 53, of 125 E. Grand St., were required to register their new addresses with the state police but failed to do so.

Avery was convicted of rape in 1989, according to data obtained on the state police Megan’s Law Web site. Backley was convicted of indecent assault in 1985.

Avery was charged with six counts of failure to comply with registration requirements and verify his current address with state police. Those charges are second-degree felonies.

Court records show Avery last registered his address of 31 E. Main St., Glen Lyon, Newport Township, with state police in January 2003. Police said he has not been in compliance since November 2003.

The Megan’s Law Unit continued to send correspondence to Avery’s last address until June 7.

The state police Fugitive Unit found Avery was living at the Nanticoke address for the past month, according to the complaint. He was residing with his daughter and her boyfriend, police said.

Backley was charged with two counts of failure to comply with registration requirements, court records show. He last

registered his address of Blue Jay Trailer Park at Harveys Lake on Sept. 25, 2006.

On Dec. 6, 2006, Backley pleaded guilty to a violation of Megan's Law after he was arrested by Wilkes-Barre police for not changing his address. He was sentenced to nine months.

In 2007, the Megan's Law Unit sent correspondence to Backley's last address, but it was returned. State police discovered he was living in Nanticoke with his sister-in law for about one year.

Avery and Backley, who are both in Luzerne County Correctional Facility on \$50,000 and \$25,000 bail, respectively, have preliminary hearings scheduled for July 29 at Central Court.

7/24/2008

A Nanticoke man was sentenced to six months probation after pleading guilty to exposing himself to a woman in Nanticoke.

Times Leader

Leo A. Wojewodzki, 46, of East Main Street, pleaded guilty to open lewdness during a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Thursday. Prosecutors withdrew charges of indecent exposure, disorderly conduct and criminal trespass. A woman told police she was parking her car at the rear of the Kanjorski Center, 40 E. Main St., on June 9 and noticed a man reading a newspaper and drinking coffee on a bench. When she parked her car, she saw a man, identified as Wojewodzki, standing outside her driver's-side door exposing himself, according to the criminal complaint. Wojewodzki was also fined \$293, according to court records.

7/24/2008

A man was charged Wednesday after he allegedly assaulted his live-in girlfriend because he locked himself out of their residence, police said.

Times Leader

William James Cupp, 50, of West Green Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault, criminal mischief and harassment. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Loretta Fenner, 48, told police she arrived home and found Cupp passed out on their front porch Tuesday night. Cupp told Fenner he was upset because he locked himself out of their residence, and struck her in the face.

Fenner drove Cupp to the police department where he assaulted her again and damaged her vehicle, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 31 in Central Court.

7/19/2008

State police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement filed charges against four men stemming from a June 27 incident at Holy Child Grove, 141 Old Newport St., according to a news release.

Times Leader

Christopher Klesmer, 20, and Lee Wysocki, 19, both of Nanticoke, were observed to be consuming beer and were detained, state police said. Klesmer refused to comply and was placed under arrest. He resisted and eventually escaped from the arresting officer, police said.

Wysocki fled and was apprehended after a brief foot chase, police said. Police said he was observed to have been furnishing alcohol to Klesmer.

Klesmer was charged with one count each of escape, resisting arrest, underage drinking and disorderly conduct, police said. Wysocki was charged with two counts of furnishing alcohol to minors, one count of disorderly conduct and underage drinking.

Christopher Wylie, 26, of Newport Township, and Zachary Hallas, 25, of Nanticoke, were charged with one count of disorderly conduct for their disruptive actions during the June incident.

The charges were filed before Luzerne County District Judge Donald Whittaker, Nanticoke.

7/18/2008

A Nanticoke man was sentenced to 48 hours to one year, six months in county prison on charges of theft and driving under the influence stemming from a January 2007 incident.

Matthew Zaremba, 20, pleaded guilty to the charges in June. He was sentenced Tuesday by Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski, Jr.

According to arrest papers, an East Broad Street woman reported to police that a blue 1997 Chevy Lumina was stolen from her home. While searching the area, police observed a vehicle matching the description at a traffic light near Kosciusko Street.

Police followed the vehicle for a short time to better identify the vehicle and stopped Zaremba on the Sans Souci Parkway.

Police said Zaremba told them "I will not lie to you ... I just stole it."

When police arrived at headquarters with Zaremba, they found Zaremba to be under the influence of an alcoholic beverage. Police said Zaremba had a blood-alcohol content of .155 percent.

Olszewski also required Zaremba to acquire a full-time job upon release from prison, attend a driving safety school and pay a \$500 fine. He also will have his license suspended for 12 months.

7/16/2008

Man accused of fleeing prison's work release program

Citizens Voice

County prosecutors have charged a former Nanticoke man with failing to return to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility's work release program last month.

Jason Demski, 25, faces a single count of escape.

The prison granted Demski temporary leave for a court-approved drug rehabilitation meeting at a Wilkes-Barre church on June 27. Police say he never returned to the facility, and a warrant was issued for his arrest until he was apprehended this past weekend.

Demski, who was arrested seven times since 2002 on various drug, burglary and robbery charges, was jailed for previously failing to appear for a court hearing. He was arrested in April in connection with a burglary at 715 Hartman Road in Plymouth Township and didn't show up for his preliminary hearing a week later, police said.

7/15/2008

Woman charged with assaulting boyfriend

Citizens Voice

Police arrested a woman Sunday night in Nanticoke for slashing her boyfriend several times with a box cutter, according to charges filed.

Mary Catherine Geiger, 29, faces charges of simple assault, recklessly endangering another person and harassment in connection with the alleged attack on William Childs.

Investigators said the two were arguing because Childs took Geiger's coffeemaker and can opener to his other girlfriend's house in Wilkes-Barre and Geiger wanted her stuff back.

Childs sustained several lacerations on the left side of his neck, and a 6- to 8-inch laceration down his back, according to arrest papers.

The incident unfolded at 275 E. Main St. just before 10 p.m.

Police said they located Childs near Burger King, and he told officers Geiger had slashed him and chased after him.

Geiger told police Childs was wearing a shirt she bought him and she tried to "cut it off," police said.

Police said Geiger was highly intoxicated when she was arrested.

7/15/2008

Charges unlikely in death

Official sees no action being taken in accident that killed skateboarder.

boboyle@timesleader.com

No charges will be filed at this time in the death of skateboarder Paul Drozdowski.

According to Michael Vough, a Luzerne County assistant district attorney, the investigation is ongoing, but there doesn't appear to be any evidence of gross negligence on the driver's part.

"State police are conducting tests and taking measurements, but it doesn't appear that we will be filing any charges,"

Vough said. "The car was traveling well under the speed limit and the victim voluntarily attached himself to the vehicle

and fell off.”

Drozdowski, 19, was pronounced dead at 10 a.m. Saturday at Community Medical Center in Scranton, where he was flown on Friday after the accident, said Lackawanna County Deputy Coroner Tim Rowland.

Rowland said Drozdowski died of traumatic brain injury and the manner of death was ruled accidental. No autopsy was performed because Drozdowski was an organ donor, he said.

Nanticoke police said the accident occurred in the Greater Nanticoke Area High School parking lot.

Drozdowski lived on Loomis Street in Nanticoke and was employed as a landscaping assistant by Walter's Landscaping. He was a 2008 graduate of Greater Nanticoke Area High School.

7/14/2008

Nanticoke teen who died in skateboarding accident identified

eskrapits@citizenvoice.com, 570-821-2072

When Paul Drozdowski — “Pauly D” to his crew in Nanticoke — was around, his sense of humor cracked everyone up. “He was the jokester of the crowd. He made you laugh,” said Drozdowski’s friend Dan Olshefski, 20. “If he was there, you knew you were having a good time.”

Olshefski and the rest of Drozdowski’s many friends can’t believe they’ll never again get to hang out with the 19-year-old who was always so full of life. Drozdowski died from a traumatic brain injury received in an accident in the Greater Nanticoke Area high school parking lot on Friday.

Drozdowski had been riding a skateboard while hanging on between the front and back doors of a car when he fell and fractured his skull, Lackawanna County Deputy Coroner Tim Rowland said. Drozdowski was pronounced dead at 10 a.m. Saturday in Community Medical Center, Scranton.

Ironically, Drozdowski wasn’t even a skateboarder — instead, he rode BMX bikes, Olshefski said.

Drozdowski and a bunch of friends saw some skateboarders in the high school parking lot Friday just before 7 p.m., and Drozdowski decided to borrow a board for a stunt, according to Olshefski. He said Drozdowski was being towed along by the car at about 10 miles per hour when he had his fatal fall.

“He just grabbed a skateboard off a kid and said, ‘watch this,’” Olshefski said. “He’s done it before. It might be stupid to grab on to a car and get pulled behind it, but who thinks you’re going to fall and split your skull?”

Nanticoke police are investigating the incident.

The night before, Thursday, Drozdowski was joking around, hanging out with the crew he had known for years. They had all attended Greater Nanticoke Area — Paul just graduated this year and was looking forward to getting his diploma after finishing one final class in summer school, Olshefski said.

On Saturday, Olshefski said he was at the four-wheel-drive jamboree in Bloomsburg with friends when he got the news Drozdowski had died.

“None of us thought he would end up passing away in CMC,” Olshefski said.

Drozdowski was an only child, and his mother, Lisa Drozdowski, is heartbroken over his death, Olshefski said.

So are his friends.

“He’s missed and loved by all the boys from Nanticoke,” Olshefski said.

Drozdowski’s friends would like to hold a benefit concert for his family on Aug. 26, at a location to be determined.

7/12/2008

Times Leader

A Nanticoke man charged with stealing lottery tickets from a market waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Wednesday, according to court records.

Edward George Bath III, 24, of East Ridge Street, waived a single count of burglary to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Prosecutors withdrew charges of theft, criminal trespass, criminal mischief and receiving stolen property against Bath. Nanticoke police charged Bath with smashing a window at Ruminski’s Market, South Market Street, and stealing cigarettes and lottery tickets on June 29.

Police said Bath was identified as the suspect by a surveillance camera that recorded the burglary, according to the criminal complaint.

7/11/2008

A Nanticoke man was sentenced to up to five years in state prison, followed by 16 months house arrest and 60 days probation on drug-related charges.

Times Leader

Raymond Paul Rittenhouse, 47, was sentenced Wednesday by Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski. The judge ordered Rittenhouse to pay more than \$1,200 in restitution costs. Rittenhouse was sentenced on three counts of delivery of a controlled substance, one count of possession with intent to deliver; possession of drug paraphernalia; and two counts of driving under the influence. He pleaded guilty to the charges in June.

7/10/2008

A man was charged Wednesday after police said he assaulted his girlfriend in front of her 8-year-old child.

Times Leader

Segundo Felix Villanueva-Santos, 48, of South Hanover Street, Nanticoke, was charged with simple assault, disorderly conduct, harassment and public drunkenness. He was released on \$1,000 unsecured bail. According to the criminal complaint: Police were stopped at South Hanover and West Church streets by a woman who claimed Villanueva-Santos struck her in the face. Police said the woman was crying and had injuries to her face. Villanueva-Santos approached the woman and began screaming, police said. Police said the woman's son witnessed the assault. A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 17 in Central Court.

7/4/2008

Plymouth Twp. man charged with inciting bar brawl

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police have filed charges against a Plymouth Township man in connection with a February brawl at a city bar. Richard Matthews, 29, of Sickler Hill Road, is charged with inciting a riot, simple assault, disorderly conduct, recklessly endangering another person and harassment. Police say Matthews participated in the beating of Jason Carl Souder on Feb. 29 at the Prospect Cafe, 23 S. Prospect St. Souder told police he was jumped by about nine people in the bar. He said he was trying to prevent several men from picking on another patron when Matthews approached and assaulted him, prompting the others to do the same.

6/28/2008

Russian national arraigned in gun shop investigation

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2072

Federal officials say a Russian national and a Nanticoke sporting goods store co-owner used fake invoices to evade U.S. export laws when shipping paramilitary equipment such as rifle scopes and night-vision optics. Martin C. Carlson, acting United States Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, alleges Sergey Korznikov and his Moscow, Russia-based hunting supply shop, Tactica Ltd., conspired with Mark Komoroski and his family-owned store, D&R Sports Center, to violate U.S. export laws. Korznikov was arraigned Friday before U.S. District Judge Malachy E. Mannion at the Max Rosenn U.S. Courthouse. Komoroski had his arraignment before Mannion on June 16. Both men have pleaded not guilty to charges against them. Korznikov, Komoroski and their respective businesses are each are charged with a single count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, money laundering, exporting defense articles without a Department of State license and exporting "merchandise, articles and objects contrary to law." The charges carry a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, a fine of \$150,000 and loss of federal benefits, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Christy H. Fawcett, who is prosecuting the case. The federal benefits issue would not apply to Korznikov, but he could face deportation, Fawcett said. According to the indictment, Korznikov and Komoroski allegedly generated false invoices to ship rifle scopes and other defense-related items. For example, the document states that on June 6, 2006, an invoice was generated for Tactica for \$12,181.26 worth of items ordered from D&R. On that same date, June 6, 2006, "D&R Sports Center generated a

second fake invoice with a false total value of goods ordered by Tactica. ... of \$94.00," the document states. The ship-to address was a man in Moscow, Russia.

"There are two sets of invoices, one of which is more accurate than the others," Carlson said during a telephone interview Friday. "They falsely describe the value and nature of the goods being shipped."

Carlson said the two sets of invoices were "part of the scheme to conceal from U.S. Customs officials and violate export laws."

As payment for five transactions, D&R Sports Center received a total of \$295,000 to a commercial account at M&T Bank via wire transfers from Langport Solutions, which England's Daily Mail newspaper identifies as being located in London. D&R's account also received a transfer of \$25,000 on July 15, 2005, from another London-based company, Verrex Associates.

Korzniakov's attorney, Robert M. Simels of New York, believes U.S. officials "jumped to assumptions that don't necessarily bear out" regarding the invoices.

"We're confident he's going to be found not guilty," Simels said of his client.

Simels has 20 days to file pre-trial motions with U.S. District Judge Edwin M. Kosik, who will then set a trial date.

Federal officials are permitting Korzniakov to extend his stay in the U.S., since he is not allowed to leave until the case is settled. He and Komoroski were arrested in January. Both men are free on bail, but they are not allowed to communicate with each other.

Carlson said the investigation is ongoing.

6/27/2008

Breaking News: Alleged taxi robber charged with burglary 11:15 a.m.

By Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

The New Jersey man accused of robbing a taxi driver Wednesday in Wilkes-Barre and committing four similar crimes since October has been charged with another burglary, Hanover Township police say.

James Franco, 30, was charged Thursday with a burglary on Stanley Street in the Upper Askam section of Hanover Township, police said.

He was arraigned by District Judge Joseph Halesy and remanded to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$50,000 bail.

He's now locked up on a total of \$150,000 on six cases in Luzerne County.

On Thursday, prosecutors beefed up that bail during a bail revocation hearing in response to his arrest on Wednesday for allegedly robbing a Posten taxi driver at knife-point and stealing the cab.

He had been out on bail on four separate cases at the time.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Tim Doherty called Franco "a clear and present danger to the residents of Luzerne County."

Since Oct. 15, Franco allegedly mugged a woman outside the Prospect Cafe in Nanticoke, participated in a purse-snatching at Gerrity's Market in Hanover Township, committed a knife-point robbery of a Uni-Mart in Nanticoke, robbed the taxi driver and burglarized two homes in Hanover Township.

Franco is a career criminal from Hudson County, N.J. He served more than 10 years in New Jersey prisons for multiple robbery and burglary arrests, according to court records. He moved to the area in July 2007.

6/26/2008

A 29-year-old Plymouth woman will spend up to one year and nine months in county prison after being sentenced on a slew of charges Wednesday afternoon.

Jodee Marie Hattan pleaded guilty in April to six counts of criminal conspiracy to commit burglary, one count of entering a false insurance claim and one count of making false reports stemming from seven different incidents.

Hattan was arrested on the charges stemming from numerous offenses last year, including: fleeing police in July after the robbery of copper pipes in Plymouth; a copper pipe robbery in Nanticoke; stealing a woman's purse outside Oplinger Towers in Nanticoke; and stealing items from Peter's Deli, Wilkes-Barre, among other offenses.

Hattan must pay more than \$35,000 in restitution for her crimes.

6/25/2008

Man steals taxi, robs driver while out on bail

By Bob Kalinowski , Staff Writer - Citizens Voice

A man out on bail for a Nanticoke robbery and a Hanover burglary robbed a cab driver at knifepoint early Wednesday morning and then stole the cab, police said.

James Franco, 30, is charged with robbery, robbery of a motor vehicle, unlawful restraint, and simple assault. Police said Franco entered the Posten taxi outside the Prospect Cafe in Nanticoke and directed the driver, Patrick Sharp, to Center Street in Hanover Township.

According to arrest papers:

Franco exited the cab, returned a short time later to the waiting cab, and put a knife to Sharp's neck, police said. Sharp gave him \$75 in fare money and \$13 of his own money.

Franco then ordered the driver to the 400 block of Franklin Street.

Sharp fled from the taxi and ran to the South Main Plaza. Franco then hopped in the taxi and tried to run Sharp over.

Franco was later spotted ditching the vehicle and was apprehended on Sobieski Street in Hanover Township.

Franco was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$50,000 bail.

Franco has been released on bail twice in the last 23 days, and police say he committed crimes both times.

He was arrested on May 19 for the May 14 armed robbery of a Uni-Mart in Nanticoke and jailed until June 2 when he was released on \$5,000 bail.

He was arrested last week in connection with a home burglary on Stanley Street in Hanover Township. He was released on \$2,500 unsecured bail.

Hanover police said that after being released on bail he committed another home burglary on Stanley Street. Those charges will be filed at Franco's preliminary hearing on the recent case, said Acting Hanover Township Police Chief Al Walker.

6/21/2008

A Shickshinny woman was charged Friday after police said she was in possession of marijuana and pills without a prescription.

Shannon L. Lewis, 31, of Bilby Hill Road, was charged with two counts of possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a small amount of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and public drunkenness. She was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were investigating a dispute between several people, including Lewis, on South Prospect Street just before 8 p.m. Thursday. Police said they found several tablets of oxycodone, oblong and clonazepam in a pill bottle and marijuana in Lewis' purse, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for June 30 in Central Court.

6/20/2008

Nanticoke woman waives right to hearing

A woman who Nanticoke police said stole a friend's purse, using the money to purchase heroin, waived her right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Thursday.

Marissa Tencza, 20, of West Washington Street, waived 16 counts of forgery, six counts of theft and five counts of identity theft to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

According to the criminal complaint, Tencza stole a purse from a friend in June 2007, and cashed five checks forging her friend's name at a grocery store. Police said Tencza obtained \$275 from the checks and admitted to using the money to buy heroin, the criminal complaint says.

6/19/2008

Vandals hit 5 Nanticoke cemeteries

Headstones toppled, American flag sticks broken and other damage reported at sites.

elewis@timesleader.com

Paul Kankiewicz and his friend Dan Kotsko noticed broken wooden American-flag sticks at St. Francis Cemetery earlier this week.

Thinking the damage was caused by recent thunderstorms and high winds, they continued with their summer job of updating cemetery burial records.

But, when they arrived at the cemetery Wednesday morning, they noticed 16 headstones had been toppled.

Police said the damage is widespread and involved four other city cemeteries -- Nanticoke City, St. Stanislaus, St. Joseph's and St. Mary's -- that are adjacent to each other in the area of Washington and Prospect streets.

Capt. Detective William Shultz said more than 100 tombstones were knocked over at the five locations. Most of the damage was found in Nanticoke City Cemetery on top of the hill.

A few reports of toppled headstones were reported to police earlier in the week, he said, noting the vandalism became more widespread. Flower pots, religious statues and solar lights were also vandalized, Shultz said.

A toppled headstone was reported on Monday by people who left the cemetery to buy topsoil, only to return to find additional vandalism at the site, Shultz said.

"Based on that report, we can't say for sure all this vandalism took place at night," Shultz said.

Shultz believes more than one person is responsible.

Tom Roman, who was cleaning his parents' burial site in the Nanticoke City Cemetery, said he didn't notice any veterans' grave markers missing from other plots.

Contact police

Anyone with information about the vandalism is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

6/17/2008

D&R Sports Center co-owner pleads not guilty to conspiracy charges

ELIZABETH SKRAPITS AND HEATH WILLIAMS

Mark Komoroski pleaded not guilty to conspiracy charges against him and his family business, D&R Sports Center, in federal court Monday.

He and the Nanticoke-based hunting-supply store were charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud and money laundering in front of U.S. District Judge Malachy E. Mannion at the Max Rosenn U.S. Courthouse.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd K. Hinkley stood in for Assistant U.S. Attorney Christy H. Fawcett, who is prosecuting the case.

Komoroski declined comment through his attorney, Philip Gelso.

Federal prosecutors claim Komoroski and his alleged co-conspirator, Sergey Korznikov of Moscow, Russia, violated U.S. export laws by allegedly smuggling military equipment — including rifles and related items such as scopes and night-vision optics — into Russia, Kuwait, Germany and Japan. Korznikov's shop, Russia-based Tactica Ltd., sells hunting and military equipment but no firearms.

Komoroski and Korznikov were arrested in January and are free on bail. Both men maintain they are innocent of the charges.

Korznikov's arraignment will be at a later date.

Komoroski has 20 days — until July 6 — to file pre-trial motions. U.S. District Judge Edwin M. Kosik, who is hearing the case, will then set a trial date.

If found guilty, Komoroski could face up to five years in prison and three years supervised release and a \$250,000 fine. D&R Sports Center could face a corporate fine of up to \$500,000.

"Obviously, a corporation can't go to jail," Mannion said.

11:36 AM

6/11/2008

Nanticoke police searching for missing man

Police are searching for 35-year old Thomas Seesoltz III, who was reported missing by his family on May 23.

Police said Seesoltz called his wife, Holly, on May 9 saying he was going fishing. He hasn't contacted any family members since he last spoke to his wife, police said.

Seesoltz may be operating a red, four door 2000 Mitsubishi Lancer with Pennsylvania registration plate GXG-6321. He is described as a white male, 5 feet 11 inches tall, approximately 210 pounds, blue eyes, red hair, fair complexion with a beard.

Anyone with information about Seesoltz is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200 or 911.

6/3/2008

Man sentenced to 10 years for attempting to have sex with a minor

Heidi Ruckno - Citizens' Voice

A Nanticoke man was sentenced on Monday to 10 years in federal prison for attempting to persuade a minor to engage in illegal sexual conduct, the United States Attorney's Office announced Monday.

Branden Holena, 21, admitted to having online chats with a 14-year-old in Luzerne County in order to entice the juvenile to meet him for a sexual encounter, U.S. Attorney Martin C. Carlson said.

Holena arranged to meet the 14-year-old on April 25, 2007, and was arrested at that meeting. He was indicted May 1, 2007.

After he is released, Holena will be on parole for life. He must also pay a \$100 special assessment.

5/21/2008

On Sunday, May 18, 2008 at 0200 hours, Nanticoke City Police received a tip that a large under age drinking party was taking place in the area of Concrete City, in the City's Hanover Section of Nanticoke.

Several Nanticoke City Officers went and located several juveniles ranging in age from 15-18 years old. City Police cited for (4) juveniles for underage consumption of alcohol and (8) with violating the City's Curfew Ordinance.

According to the juveniles many more kids were participating earlier and had left.

Officers are conducting an investigation as to whom supplied the teens with the beer. Police say, supplying alcohol to minors is a crime Police look very serious at. Offenders could look at fines not less than \$1000.00 and/or the possibility of facing jail time.

5/21/2008

On Sunday, May 18, 2008 at 0200 hours, Nanticoke City Police received a tip that a large under age drinking party was taking place in the area of **Concrete City**, in the City's Hanover Section of Nanticoke.

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Concrete City Overview

The Concrete City was built as company housing in 1911 for select employees of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad's coal division in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. It was eventually taken over by the Glen Alden Coal Company who, uninterested in paying for required improvements and unable to demolish it due to its robust construction, abandoned the property in 1924. It stands to this day, albeit in extreme disrepair.

In 1998, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission declared Concrete City an historic site.

5/21/2008

Cops: Man serves time, then holds up same store again

elewis@timesleader.com

A man who served prison time for robbing the Uni-Mart on Blackman Street in 2004 is facing charges that he held up the same store at knifepoint in March, according to arrest records.

Police said Peter E. Naperkowski Jr., 30, whose last known address is Wyoming Street, Hanover Township, is facing three counts each of robbery and theft in connection to the holdups at the Uni-Mart and the East End Sunoco Service Station on Kidder Street.

Naperkowski also is facing robbery charges stemming from a holdup at the Rite Aid Pharmacy on East Main Street in Nanticoke and separate retail theft charges that were filed by Plains Township police, according to arrest records.

Naperkowski was released on parole on Oct. 24 after serving more than two years in state prison for robbing the Blackman Street Uni-Mart in July 2004, according to the state Department of Corrections and court records.

The robbery and theft charges stemming from the recent Uni-Mart and the East End Sunoco incidents were filed by city

police detectives Robert Zavada and George Hudock. He hadn't been arraigned on the charges as of Tuesday.

According to arrest and court records:

- March 12: Wilkes-Barre police said Naperkowski entered the Uni-Mart at about 3:30 p.m. and threatened a clerk with a kitchen knife before getting away with money.
- March 13: Nanticoke police said Naperkowski entered the Rite Aid Pharmacy at about 8:42 p.m. and placed a candy bar on the counter. When a clerk opened the register, Naperkowski displayed a pocket knife and demanded cash. The clerk closed the register, and Naperkowski walked behind the counter, where he stole two cartons of cigarettes.
- March 20: Wilkes-Barre police said Naperkowski entered the Sunoco Service Station at about 12:30 p.m. and told a clerk he wanted to purchase shampoo. During the sale, Naperkowski displayed a knife and threatened a clerk before getting away with money.
- March 25: Plains Township police said Naperkowski entered Team Supply Inc., Route 315, at about 11:42 a.m. and inquired about saw blades. He ran out of the store with a chainsaw valued at \$1,100, and sped away in a maroon Oldsmobile.
- March 31: Wilkes-Barre police said Naperkowski entered the Sunoco Service Station at about 4:45 p.m., walked behind the counter and threatened a clerk with a knife. He ran out of the store with money.
- April 5: Plains Township police charged Naperkowski with stealing five cartons of cigarettes from the Rite Aid Pharmacy on South River Street.
- April 6: Plains Township police found the maroon Oldsmobile parked at the Fox Ridge Inn on Route 315, according to arrest records. Police said the vehicle matched the description of several thefts in the area. Police inquired at the motel's front desk and learned Naperkowski was staying in a room. When police were in the motel room, they say they observed empty heroin packets and paraphernalia. Police said store clerks at the Uni-Mart in Wilkes-Barre and the **Rite Aid Pharmacy in Nanticoke** identified Naperkowski from a photo array, arrest records say. Naperkowski confessed to Zavada and Hudock, according to arrest records, that he robbed the Sunoco. He is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$28,000 total bail in connection to the charges filed by police in **Nanticoke** and Plains Township, according to court records.

5/21/2008

Nanticoke man gets federal prison sentence for false statements made to gun dealers

Citizens Voice

U.S. District Judge James M. Munley on Tuesday sentenced a Nanticoke man to 35 months in federal prison for making false statements to a gun dealer in connection with the purchase of 12 firearms, some of which he provided to a known drug trafficker, the U.S. attorney's office said.

David John Searfoss, 57, of East Main Street, was a drug addict who was a "straw-purchaser" for a crack dealer who provided him crack in exchange for the guns, authorities said.

Several of the guns registered to him were recovered at the scene of a shooting in Philadelphia, along with 134 pounds of cocaine and \$176,365, prosecutors said.

Investigators said Searfoss purchased the guns over four months in 2006 at guns stores throughout Luzerne County. He lied to the gun shop owners when they asked him questions about the transactions, investigators said.

5/19/2008

Nanticoke robbery suspect in jail

James R. Franco, of Hanover Twp., is robber who offered clerk \$20 of take, cops say.

By smocarsky@timesleader.com

Township and Nanticoke police on Sunday arrested a man in the Wednesday robbery of a Nanticoke convenience store in which the robber offered the store clerk part of his take.

James R. Franco, 30, of 44 Center St., Hanover Township, was arrested at his home at about 10:40 a.m. and charged with robbery and theft by unlawful taking, police said.

According to court records:

A robber walked into the Uni-Mart at 61 E. Main St. just before 2 a.m. and approached from behind the store clerk, who was making coffee. He stuck an object in her side and ordered her to the cash register.

The clerk gave the robber the money from the register, and the robber tried to hand the clerk a \$20 bill. Police said the

clerk refused, saying, "I don't want it. Take it and get out of here." The robber fled the store. The clerk ran outside and alerted two patrons who were pumping gas, and one of the patrons chased the robber. The patron told police he fell during the chase and lost sight of the robber after the robber ran into an alley off Shea Street. The store owner recognized the robber on a video surveillance tape and told police the robber was a customer in the store the previous day.

Nanticoke Detective Cpts. William Shultz and Kevin Grevera reviewed the previous day's surveillance tapes and recognized the suspect as Franco, whom they had arrested on a strong-arm robbery charge last year, police said. The store clerk and the customer who gave chase identified Franco as the robbery suspect from a photo, according to police. Police also received several phone calls from the public identifying Franco as the suspect after the media published and broadcast his photo from the surveillance tapes, police said. Franco was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker and lodged at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$75,000 cash bail. His preliminary hearing is set for 9 a.m. May 28. Steve Mocarsky, a Times Leader staff writer, may be reached at 459-2005.

5/15/2008

Hanover Twp., Nanticoke authorities seek suspect in robberies

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Authorities in two towns are working together to determine whether the theft of a restaurant's cash register in Hanover Township and robbery of a Nanticoke convenience store early Wednesday were related. Around 2 a.m., a male confronted the clerk of the Nanticoke Uni-Mart while she was making coffee, grabbed her by the shoulder and indicated he had a weapon by sticking an object into her side, police said. She complied with his demands to empty the register and handed him cash. Police said he then tried to hand her a \$20 bill before fleeing, but she declined.

Two male patrons, who were pumping gas, chased the suspect, but they lost sight of him. About two hours later, a male swiped the cash register from Austies Family Restaurant on the Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township. In that incident, witnesses told police the male first walked into the bathroom. On the way out, he grabbed a hold of the cash register and fled out the door and across the Sans Souci Parkway, Hanover police Acting Chief Al Walker said.

He hopped in a vehicle and fled down Dundee Road. Several customers tried to give chase and follow, but were unsuccessful, he said.

The suspect in the Uni-Mart robbery was described as a white male, between 20 and 30 years of age, approximately 5'3" and 170 pounds. He was wearing a blue and white hooded jacket with the hood over his head, blue jean shorts and sneakers. Hanover's suspect was similar in description, Walker said.

Anyone with information on the incidents are asked to call Hanover police at 825-1254, Nanticoke police at 735-2200, or 911.

5/8/2008

Four Hundred Club cited

The Four Hundred Club of Nanticoke, 1211 S. Prospect St., was cited for a violation of the state liquor code for insufficient funds of issued checks or drafts, according to a news release from the state police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement.

The violation occurred on Feb. 13, according to the bureau. Penalties could range from \$50 to \$1,000 for minor offenses and up to \$5,000 for more serious offenses.

5/2/2008

Man charged twice with domestic assaults in single day, arrest records say

elewis@timesleader.com

Police said they arrested a man twice within a day on charges he assaulted his live-in girlfriend.

Police said the woman claimed she was assaulted with a knife during the second incident Thursday night, hours after she was initially struck in the face.

Michael Mikolaitis, 32, of West Union Street, is facing three counts of simple assault and two counts of harassment. He

is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail, according to court records. Mikolaitis was initially charged Thursday morning after his girlfriend claimed he struck her in the face during an argument, police said.

He was arrested at his home at about 1 a.m. and released without bail.

Police were summoned to his home at about 7 p.m. Thursday after the woman claimed he cut her arm with a knife, arrest records say.

Police said the woman returned home after shopping with friends. Mikolaitis was home with a friend and playing loud music.

The woman claimed, police said, Mikolaitis had a steak knife in his hand and slashed her arm.

Mikolaitis denied assaulting the woman with the knife, telling police he had been sleeping, arrest records say.

Police said Mikolaitis was not permitted in the home on Thursday after he was initially charged in the morning.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for May 8 in Central Court.

4/25/2008

A Nanticoke man was charged Wednesday with stealing items from a home on Church Street in March, police said.

James M. Hughes, 19, of State Street, was charged with theft and receiving stolen property, police said. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

A woman who was house sitting the Church Street residence invited Hughes and other people to the home on March 8.

The woman noticed a television missing and found it in a vehicle that was linked to Hughes.

Hughes was asked to leave the home and was given a ride to his residence. He removed a bag filled with items from the vehicle's trunk.

The woman noticed numerous DVDs and jewelry missing from the home. When she inquired about the missing items, Hughes returned the DVDs and jewelry the next day, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for May 1 in Central Court.

4/22/2008

A man was charged Monday with allegedly assaulting his girlfriend in her West Union Street home.

Rey Rivera, 41, was charged with simple assault and harassment after his girlfriend, Luz Lopez, alleged he choked her in her residence early Monday morning, police said.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for April 30 in Central Court.

4/19/2008

Armed robber sentenced to more than seven years in prison

A Kingston man convicted in the armed robbery of a Nanticoke Uni-Mart convenience store was sentenced Friday to more than seven years in a federal prison.

Michael Johnson, 28, formerly of Philadelphia, walked up to the store counter on May 10, 2007, with a 30-cent pack of gum. He drew a .22-caliber pistol, demanded money from the clerk and made off with more than \$130.

Johnson was arrested in July in a traffic stop in Hanover Township. Police found the loaded gun in the car and Johnson later admitted to the robbery.

U.S. District Court Judge William J. Nealon ordered Johnson serve three years of probation after his 87 months in jail. He must also pay the stolen money back to the store.

4/17/2008

Three jailed in home invasion

Men allegedly threatened two women with pellet guns.

elewis@timesleader.com

Three men were charged Wednesday with forcing their way into a city home armed with what turned out to be pellet guns, police said.

Police said Michael A. Ewell, 19, Jerome A. Tucker, 20, both from Apollo Circle, Nanticoke, and Jamil D. Tucker, 21,

of South Atherton Avenue, Kingston, forced their way into a home on West Church Street at about 10:30 Tuesday night. They used the pellet guns to threaten two women who believed the guns were real, police said. Police said they recovered the pellet guns from a Chevrolet Malibu the men allegedly used to drive to the home. They were arrested at the Apollo Circle apartment shared by Ewell and Jerome Tucker, police said. The three men were charged with two counts each of burglary and stalking, and one count each of criminal trespass, possession instruments of crime, terroristic threats and reckless endangerment. They were jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail each.

According to the criminal complaints:

Bonnie and Amanda Lorah told police several armed men forced their way inside their West Church Street residence as they attempted to lock the front door. The women claimed Jerome and his brother, Jamil, threatened them while waving what they thought were real handguns.

Amanda claimed Jerome and Jamil were saying, "You're going to get it," and "Let's pop off what's good," the criminal complaints say.

The suspects fled the residence before police arrived.

The Tuckers' brother, Eric Tucker, told police Jerome drove to the West Church Street residence because he wanted to fight Scott Lorah following an earlier dispute. Eric Tucker, who wasn't charged, waited in the vehicle and watched Jerome, Jamil and Ewell force their way inside while armed with the pellet guns, the criminal complaint says.

No injuries were reported.

Preliminary hearings are tentatively scheduled for April 24 in Central Court.

4/11/2008

Court clears magistrate

hruckno@citizensvoice.com

Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke was cleared of all misconduct allegations Thursday after the Pennsylvania Court of Judicial Discipline dismissed complaints against him.

The majority opinion, written by Judge William D. Bucci, was handed down late Thursday afternoon. The court ruled there was insufficient evidence that Whittaker was unprofessional and discourteous, and that his employment with the Newport Township Fire Department did not violate a provision preventing him from holding other public positions.

"I'm elated," said Whittaker, who declined to elaborate on the decision.

Whittaker's former colleague, Maryann Kearney, filed a complaint against the judge in April 2007. She claimed he repeatedly used embarrassing, inappropriate and offensive language in her presence, and that he hurt her already injured shoulder in 2005 during one of those exchanges.

Whittaker faced two counts of misconduct — engaging in conduct which brings the judicial office into disrepute and holding another office or position of profit in government. He was also accused of failing to be patient, dignified and courteous to litigants, witnesses, lawyers and others with whom he dealt, but the conduct board dropped that charge.

"We find that the Board did not sustain its burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence the allegations made by Maryann Kearney," the opinion said.

According to the decision, the court did not find Kearney a credible witness because she waited a year to report the alleged misconduct. Furthermore, the judges were not entirely convinced she was offended by Whittaker's alleged remarks.

The work environment at the Nanticoke City Municipal Building, where Whittaker and Kearney both worked, was very relaxed, according to the decision. Employees frequently told dirty jokes and used off-color language, the court indicated.

Kearney was in charge of the "Birthday Club," in which all the employees would pool their money to buy cards and gifts for their co-workers. The birthday club gave Whittaker four sexually explicit birthday cards, which Kearney picked out and signed. The court concluded she would not have picked out the cards if the two did not have a friendly relationship.

The opinion also addressed Whittaker's employment with the Newport Township Fire Department. The judge did not know his employment violated the Rule of Governing Standards of Conduct of Magisterial District Judges, the Court ruled.

According to the opinion, Whittaker held that job from 2001 until 2006, and reported his income every year to the appropriate agencies. He resigned immediately after learning his employment might be a violation of the standards of conduct.

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts never notified Whittaker of the possible violation. He assumed they would have if there had been a problem. Kearney has 10 days to appeal the decision. If she does not, the court will issue an order dismissing the complaint.

4/11/2008

Breaking News: Police nab Plains Township bank robber 9:30 a.m.

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Police have apprehended the man they say robbed a Plains Township bank on Thursday.

Ivory D. Jarmon, 42, of Plymouth, was nabbed around 4:30 a.m. this morning at a friend's home on Enterprise Street in Nanticoke.

Investigators say Jarmon's girlfriend, Megan Zywotek, identified Jarmon as the robber after she saw his picture on the 11 p.m. television news.

Jarmon is charged with robbery and theft. He got away with \$870 from the M&T Bank on River Street after demanding cash and threatening to have a gun, police said.

Police say Jarmon admitted to the crime, saying he needed money to buy crack cocaine.

Jarmon is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$250,000 cash bail.

4/7/2008

Hanover Township man charged with armed robbery

elewis@timesleader.com

A person of interest in a robbery at a Wilkes-Barre convenient store was charged Monday with an armed robbery at a pharmacy in Nanticoke last month.

Peter E. Naperkowski Jr., 30, of Wyoming Street, Hanover Township, was charged with two counts of robbery and a single count of theft. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Nanticoke police were summoned to the Rite Aid Pharmacy on East Main Street on March 13 when a man threatened a clerk with a knife while demanding money.

Police learned that Wilkes-Barre police were investigating a robbery at a convenient store on Hazle Street on March 19.

The same photo array used by Wilkes-Barre police was shown to a clerk at the Rite Aid Pharmacy, who identified Naperkowski at the suspect, according to the criminal complaint.

Naperkowski hasn't been charged in connection to the robbery in Wilkes-Barre.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for April 16 in Central Court.

4/6/2008

A Nanticoke man was charged Thursday with assaulting his girlfriend and fighting with police.

John Purvin, 47, of West Broad Street, was charged with simple assault, resisting arrest and harassment. He was released on \$3,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were summoned to the West Broad Street residence at about 10 p.m. Wednesday after Purvin's girlfriend, Erin Fletcher, claimed he punched her in the head.

Fletcher told police they were arguing after Purvin arrived home after drinking at a bar.

Purvin left but returned to the residence where he fought with police.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 10 in Central Court.

3/26/2008

Newport Twp. man arrested for role in robbery, burglary

By Bob Kalinowski - CV

A Newport Township man is facing charges for his role in a robbery plot and burglary at the Getty gas station at 77 N. Market St. in Nanticoke.

Police say Alberto Rios, 20, of 28 John St., Sheatown, and two men conspired to rob the station at gunpoint, but instead burglarized it Monday night after it was closed and stealing the cash register.

The register was taken to Rios' home and pried open. It was empty, police said.

Police said Rios and two accomplices, who have yet to be located, then decided to return to the business in an attempt to open or steal the safe. The trio attempted to open the safe by throwing cinder blocks at it, but their effort failed, according to arrest papers filed with Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

A passerby spotted the men and called police. Investigators say Rios admitted to his role in the crime. Rios said the robbery/burglary plot was hatched to help an acquaintance pay off a drug debt.

Rios was charged with attempted robbery, conspiracy, burglary, theft and criminal mischief. He was jailed in lieu of \$25,000 cash bail.

3/22/2008

Plea talks delay hearing in gun shop probe

By enissley@timeshamrock.com

Talk of possible plea deals for two men accused of shipping restricted paramilitary items from a Nanticoke gun shop to a company tied to Russia's intelligence agency have delayed a preliminary hearing on the charges.

Sergey Korznikov, a native of Moscow, Russia, and Mark Komoroski, co-owner of D&R Sports Center in Nanticoke, face charges related to alleged smuggling of military equipment — including telescopic rifle scopes, binoculars and night-vision optics — into Russia, Kuwait, Germany and Japan in violation of U.S. export laws.

Investigators say that in 2005, D&R sold some of the items to Moscow-based Tactica Ltd., which has been identified as having an affiliation with an elite counterterrorism unit controlled by the Russian Federal Security Service, formerly the KGB, according to reports by The Associated Press.

Korznikov is the owner of Tactica, which he has said was a hunting and military equipment shop in Moscow.

A hearing scheduled for Friday may have shed more light on the allegations made by federal investigators. The proceeding was canceled after lawyers for Korznikov and Komoroski indicated they were in discussions with prosecutors about a possible plea deal.

Neither man's attorney, nor Assistant U.S. Attorney William Houser were available for comment Friday. The preliminary hearing was rescheduled for April 18, but prosecutors could file an indictment before then.

D&R Sports was searched in November 2006 as part of an investigation by U.S. Treasury officials into a global arms transport network controlled by Russian businessman Victor Bout, according to Associated Press reports.

In January, investigators arrested Korznikov as he vacationed at the Great Wolf Lodge in the Poconos.

He was jailed for three days before posting \$150,000 bail. He had to surrender his passport and cannot leave the country.

Komoroski was arrested in January as well after a raid at the gun shop. He remains free on bail. Both men deny they've broken any laws.

3/15/2008

City police looking for armed robber

City police are looking for an armed robber who threatened a clerk at knife point at a Rite-Aid store on East Main Street on Thursday night.

Around 8:40 p.m., a white male wearing a maroon hooded sweatshirt and baseball cap walked into the store and purchased a candy bar, Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz said.

The robber is described as thin build, about 6-feet tall and in his late teens to early 20s. Anyone with information is asked to contact Nanticoke City police at 735-2200.

2/27/2008

Man charged with sexual assault

elewis@timesleader.com

A man from West Nanticoke was charged with sexually assaulting a woman in Nanticoke on Feb. 9.

James Robert Davis Jr., 30, of Houseman Street, was charged with two counts of aggravated indecent assault and criminal trespass, and a single count of simple assault. He is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police:

A woman claimed Davis knocked on her rear door on Feb. 9. She looked out and didn't see anyone. When she opened the door, Davis forced his way inside and assaulted the woman, the criminal complaint says. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for March 4 in Central Court.

2/26/2008

Nanticoke police asked to investigate possible thefts at Luzerne County Community College

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com

Nanticoke police were called in Monday to investigate possible thefts at Luzerne County Community College. "The college has requested us to do an extensive investigation on missing money and missing property from the school," Nanticoke Detective Captain William Shultz said.

LCCC President Thomas Leary said college officials contacted police after receiving a report on some missing items belonging to the school.

"We have turned it over to the police, so I am going to allow them to make their investigation, draw their conclusions, and the college will proceed from that point," Leary said.

He did not want to comment on specifics, such as what kind of property was missing and from which department.

"I've asked them (Nanticoke police) to thoroughly investigate the matter and I don't want to impede their investigation in any way by commenting on it. I don't think it's fair to them," Leary said.

Previously, college officials staged an internal investigation into \$1,200 missing from the auxiliary fund, which is basically the proceeds from the cafeteria.

It was determined bank deposits had been misplaced. The money was recovered and tighter controls were put in place, according to a statement from college officials.

2/20/2008

William J. Thomas, 48, of East Main Street, Nanticoke, was charged Tuesday with assaulting his girlfriend during an argument.

Thomas was charged with simple assault and harassment. He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

According to the criminal complaint: Police were summoned at about 8:20 p.m. Monday to a home on Shea Street, where Tammy Maslowski claimed Thomas assaulted her. Maslowski told police Thomas grabbed her neck and started choking her. She claimed Thomas pushed her and caused her to strike her head against a bathtub, the criminal complaint says.

Thomas claimed Maslowski assaulted him causing a head injury.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 28 in Central Court.

1/29/2008

Marion Williams, of East Main Street, reported someone stole her purse from her home on Saturday.

Five male juveniles were cited with underage drinking offenses after police said they encountered them inside a parked vehicle on West Main Street on Saturday.

Two 15-year-old males and a 13-year-old female were cited with disorderly conduct after police said they were throwing food at passing vehicles on East Church Street on Sunday.

Michael Viggiano, of East Church Street, reported five fishing poles were stolen from his truck while it was parked near his home on Thursday.

Cindy Gulvas, of West South Street, reported jewelry was stolen from her home on Thursday.

1/22/2008

Robert Sabol, of East Union Street, reported Friday that someone stole a stroller, 20 compact discs and a wallet from his car while it was parked near his home.

Michelle Faux, of Enterprise Street, reported someone stole a GPS unit from her husband's car while it was parked near their home on Friday.

Shirley Levandowski, of West Union Street, reported someone stole a money bag with coupons, a hand tool and money from her car while it was parked near her home on Saturday.

Frank Marshallick, of West Washington Street, reported someone damaged his car with a paint gun on Sunday.

1/12/2008

Nanticoke man gets 10 years for attempting to lure minor

Nicholas Sohr

A Nanticoke man was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on Friday for attempting to use the Internet to contact a minor for sex.

The online contact between Jamie Myers, 32, and the minor occurred between May 2007 and July 12, 2007. The conviction followed an investigation by the FBI, Scranton Police Department and the Nanticoke Police Department, according to a statement issued by U.S. Attorney Martin C. Carlson.

1/11/2008

Russian national arrested in gun shop investigation

By eskrapits@citizensvoice.com

Federal authorities broke their silence Thursday about a Nanticoke sporting goods dealer facing conspiracy charges, including the revelation his Russian trade partner was also arrested.

The office of Acting U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania Martin C. Carlson gave official word that Mark Komoroski, co-owner of D&R Sports Center on Fairchild Street, and Sergey Korznikov, a Russian national and principal of Tactica Ltd. in Moscow, were arrested Monday.

The men are charged with conspiring to export military equipment, including rifle scopes, magazines for guns, and face shields from the U.S. to Russia "to be resold to unknown persons," according to a press release.

There were no firearms involved. Komoroski said he has shipped guns to other places in Russia, but never to Korznikov's business, Tactica Ltd., which does not have an import license for firearms.

The release incorrectly identifies Komoroski as a Russian national.

"I was born and raised in Nanticoke. I've been to Russia one time to visit. That was it," Komoroski said.

Heidi Havens, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District, confirmed the two men were arrested but not indicted.

Komoroski was freed on \$50,000 bail Monday. Korznikov was released from prison on \$150,000 bail Thursday, Komoroski said.

Federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Attorney's office, have been tight-lipped about the ongoing investigation, refusing to comment.

Other agencies participating in the investigation are the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigations Unit; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

All papers pertaining to the case are sealed, Havens said.

Komoroski maintains he and Korznikov are innocent.

"They jumped the gun because Sergey was staying in the United States," Komoroski said.

Korznikov is vacationing in the U.S. with his family, Komoroski said. He said the Korznikovs stayed in New York City over Christmas, then came to spend a day with the Komoroski family after the holiday. The Korznikovs were finishing their vacation at a Poconos resort, the Great Wolf Lodge in Monroe County, at the time of his arrest.

"It was just not fair, coming in from a family vacation," Komoroski said. "They took a good person — an innocent person — a good human being with a good family, and turned him into nothing more than a villain."

Tactica Ltd. sells brand-name hunting equipment, such as range finders, night vision equipment, binoculars and clothing.

Komoroski said he has obtained required licenses for everything he ships. A sampling of his export licenses from the U.S. Department of Commerce show he was cleared to send items, including ballistic face shields, helmets and optical

scopes for rifles to Tactica Ltd.

All manufacturers of defense articles, as well as exporters of the items, have to register with the Department of State, said Pat Peterson, spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Political and Military Affairs. Once registered, they can get permanent or temporary export licenses.

To obtain a license, there are five different types of forms to fill out, Department of State spokeswoman Nicole Thompson said. These are submitted to the State Department's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls.

The forms are reviewed, and, "either you are granted a license or not, and from there you are able to export weapons under the parameters of the license you are granted," Thompson said.

The Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security issues export licenses for items not designed for military use, such as certain kinds of hunting equipment.

But anything listed under Category One of the United States Munitions List must go through the U.S. Department of State Political-Military Affairs bureau of the Directorate of Defense Trade Controls, Peterson said.

The list includes non-automatic, semi-automatic and automatic firearms to .50 caliber inclusive, combat shotguns, rifle scopes manufactured to military specifications and silencers.

1/10/2008

Jason Anthony Bovee, 23, of East State Street, Nanticoke, was arrested early Tuesday morning in connection to breaking into his ex-girlfriend's residence and assaulting her boyfriend.

Bovee was charged with three counts of simple assault, and one count each of resisting arrest and criminal trespass.

According to the criminal complaint, Jessica Luke told police Bovee forced his way inside her residence on East Noble Street and assaulted her boyfriend, Michael Malast, at about 5:35 a.m.

Malast and Bovee fought until they were separated by police.

Bovee also struggled with police, pushing an officer into a closet door, the criminal complaint says.

Two officers sustained minor injuries.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Jan. 16 in Central Court, Wilkes-Barre.

1/10/2008

Gun shop owner says overseas gun sales were legit

By eskrapits@citizensvoice.com

A Nanticoke sporting goods dealer maintains his innocence on federal charges relating to overseas sales of firearms and accessories.

D&R Sports Center on Fairchild Street, which Mark Komoroski co-owns with two family members, has been under investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement since November 2006.

The federal agency alleges D&R illegally sold and shipped restricted items — rifles and accessories such as optics — to countries including Russia, without required export licenses.

Komoroski said the allegations are false. He said he always complies with federal regulations.

"I have every documentation and every license," he said. "Our government gave me full authorization to send everything out of this country, and I have the full documentation to prove it."

Agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested Komoroski Monday and charged him with one count of conspiracy relating to exporting materials outside the country. He is free on \$50,000 bail. If convicted, he could serve a maximum of five years in prison.

"Mr. Komoroski has denied the allegations," his attorney Frank Nocito would only say when contacted Wednesday.

The conspiracy charge is related to Komoroski's customer Sergey Korznikov, the principal of Tactica Ltd. The Moscow-based company sells rifle optics, binoculars, boots, backpacks and other hunting and paramilitary equipment — but no firearms.

Komoroski questioned why federal authorities would grant him permission to do business with the Russian company if there was something illegal going on.

"The licenses are 100 percent legit. I received one today for (Korznikov)," Komoroski said Tuesday. "That's what's sort of amazing. They keep sending me licenses to send stuff to this person, then they arrest me for sending it to him."

Komoroski has not been indicted. His next scheduled court date is a preliminary examination Jan. 23 in Scranton. The federal government could request a continuance at that time for the purpose of seeking an indictment.

Komoroski doesn't know what will happen next, but said D&R is staying open and will continue sending items

overseas.

“We’ve got a lot of licenses in the system. We might have 40 pending licenses to ship merchandise all over the world,” he said.

James Conmy, staff writer, contributed to this report.

1/9/2008

Gun shop owner arrested by feds

By eskrapits@citizensvoice.com

A handwritten sign on the front door of D&R Sports Center on Monday stated the business would be closed for the day. It was an emergency situation: one of the store’s owners, Mark Komoroski, was arrested on conspiracy charges stemming from a federal investigation ongoing since 2006.

The U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agency, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security, is trying to determine whether D&R was involved in illegal sales of paramilitary items overseas, or was conducting business with people and companies linked to illegal arms sales.

Komoroski, who co-owns D&R Sports Center at 620 Fairchild St. in Nanticoke and at 2989 Columbia Blvd. in Bloomsburg with his brother and father, handles international orders. He called his arrest “very surprising.”

“They questioned me, and when they told me the charges, I said, ‘You’re arresting me for something that didn’t happen,’” he said. “They said everything would be straightened out.”

Komoroski said he willingly went to state police barracks in Wyoming to talk with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents.

“It wasn’t a real big deal. I cooperated fully with them for about an hour,” he said.

He was freed on bail after conspiracy charges were filed with a federal judge in Scranton. Komoroski’s attorney, Frank Nocito, was present.

“It happened so fast, and I was out of there almost in 20 minutes,” Komoroski said.

D&R has been under federal investigation since November 2006, when agents from the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives applied for a search warrant in U.S. District Court in Scranton.

Federal agents collected wire transfer, shipping records and other documents from D&R on Nov. 8, 2006. Agents returned to the store Monday for further documentation, Komoroski said.

In the application for the search warrant, agents allege Komoroski used D&R to “illegally transfer sensitive, national-security controlled items to the Russian Federation (Russia). Kuwait, Germany and Japan without the required export licenses.” The items included night-vision optics, firearms and accessories.

D&R is properly licensed by the U.S. government to send firearms and accessories to Pakistan, Norway, Japan, Kuwait — anywhere except prohibited Middle Eastern countries, Komoroski said.

“We never wanted to get involved with the Middle East countries. Never have, never will,” he said.

The application also alleged Komoroski conducted business with individuals with whom the government does not allow transactions due to risk of involvement with narcotics, crimes against humanity, war crimes or terrorism.

These included sales to companies tied to Russian arms trafficker Victor Bout, who the government identified as providing weapons to the Taliban, Liberian dictator Charles Taylor and rebel groups in Rwanda, and sales to heroin trafficker Ibrahim Haji.

Komoroski called them “fictional characters” whose names the federal agencies pulled off the Internet.

Komoroski believes the federal conspiracy charges pertain to his longtime business involvement with Sergey Korznikov, the principal of Moscow-based Tactica Ltd.

Only there was no conspiracy, Komoroski stressed.

Tactica is a legitimate company that sells optics and other firearm and hunting supplies, but no guns. D&R is licensed to send helmets, rifle optics, scopes, face shields and other military items to Russia — in fact, he just got clearance to send bulletproof vests for the Moscow police department, Komoroski said.

1/8/2008

Nanticoke police looking for man who robbed store

Bob Kalinowski -Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police are investigating an armed robbery that occurred Sunday at the Uni-Mart store at 18 N. Market St.

Police said the suspect walked in the store just before 6 p.m., pointed a semi-automatic pistol at a female clerk and demanded money.

The suspect obtained an unknown amount of cash, including a hand full of quarters, and ordered the clerk to the ground, the employee told police.

He then allegedly tucked the gun in his waistband and fled on foot.

The suspect is described as a white male about 5-feet, 8-inches tall. He was wearing a dark blue hooded sweatshirt or jacket with a hood over his head and a multi-colored handkerchief around his face. He was wearing dark blue jeans, tan work boots and black gloves.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

1/5/2008

2 views of Whittaker's behavior emerge

State reviews allegations that district judge made sexually offensive remarks.

By Terrie Morgan-Beseckertmorgan@timesleader.com

Law & Order Reporter

HARRISBURG – To Maryann Kearney, District Judge Donald Whittaker was a foul-mouth sexist who humiliated her with vulgar language and crude sexual remarks.

But other workers at the Nanticoke municipal building say Whittaker was merely a jokester who joined fellow employees in engaging in light-hearted, sexually tinged banter that was common within the office.

The widely differing portraits of the Nanticoke magistrate emerged Thursday during a hearing before a state disciplinary board that will decide whether the longtime jurist should be sanctioned for behavior he allegedly exhibited outside the courtroom.

The Judicial Conduct Board in May charged Whittaker, 48, of Newport Township, with violating the code of judicial conduct by bringing disrepute to his office.

The complaint was based on allegations made by Kearney, who claimed Whittaker made several sexually explicit comments to her and other females in 2005. Kearney, an employee of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority, had an office in the municipal building.

The board's attorney, Chief Counsel Joseph Massa Jr., called four witnesses before a three-judge panel of the state's Court of Judicial Discipline.

At times, the four-hour hearing focused more on Kearney's behavior than Whittaker's as Al Flora Jr., one of Whittaker's attorneys, attacked Kearney's credibility.

Several witnesses for Whittaker, who has been in office since 1994, testified Kearney was known to have a foul mouth herself. They also claimed she gave Whittaker sexually explicit birthday cards she had purchased as part of the "Birthday Club," a group of employees who chipped in money to buy cards and birthday cakes for co-workers.

It was all part of a light-hearted, friendly atmosphere the employees said permeated the various offices within the municipal building. That changed drastically after Kearney filed her complaint in August 2005, they said.

The board's complaint was based on three incidents:

- Jan. 24, 2005 – Kearney claimed Whittaker approached her after she used the restroom and asked her in front of several people if she "had a hard time getting it out" and if she "needed a pencil to work it out."
- Jan. 26, 2005 – Kearney was speaking with Patricia Zendarski, a records clerk for the city, when she claimed Whittaker put his hands on her shoulders and forcibly twisted her neck. Kearney, who had just had shoulder surgery, claims she said told Whittaker to stop because he was hurting her. Zendarski, the board's other key witness, testified Whittaker, using a vulgar term, then asked Kearney how she performed oral sex on her husband. Kearney conceded during her testimony that she did not hear that comment, however.

- May 6, 2005 – Kearney said Whittaker was standing near the lunch room when she heard several women comment that Whittaker looked nice. He then allegedly referred to the women by a vulgar slang term for female genitalia. Questioned by Flora, Kearney acknowledged she did not physically see Whittaker or any of the women. She said she recognized Whittaker by his voice, and is certain he made the comment.

That testimony was rebutted by Whittaker and five current or former female employees he called to testify. All five women said they never heard Whittaker use the term in question.

In his testimony Thursday, Whittaker also denied ever making the "pencil" comment to Kearney, or that he made the

comment regarding oral sex. Whittaker did admit he put his hand on Kearney's shoulder in the Jan.26 incident, but insisted it was a light touch that lasted "three seconds."

Flora also questioned if the complaint was politically motivated because Whittaker was seeking re-election that year. Kearney, whose daughter is married to state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, denied politics played a role.

Whittaker is also accused of violating a separate rule that bars judges from having outside employment within their districts. Whittaker admitted he was employed as a fire truck driver for Newport Township, but maintains he was unaware he was violating the rule.

The panel, which consisted of judges William Lamb, William Bucci and John Musmano, took the case under advisement and will issue a decision after the submission of legal briefs by attorneys for both sides.

If the panel determines Whittaker violated conduct rules, a second hearing to determine the punishment will be held. The severity of the punishment can range from a reprimand to removal from office.

2007

12/27/2007

Man charged with witness harassment

Brother of suspect is accused of calling 15-year-old girl a 'snitch.'

elewis@timesleader.com

A Glen Lyon man was charged with harassing a witness in a drug and kidnapping case as the witness was leaving a hearing.

Kevin Mayewski, 18, was charged Monday with two counts of stalking and a single count of retaliation against a witness. He was arraigned by District Judge Joseph Zola in Hazleton and remained jailed Wednesday at the county correctional facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

Nanticoke Police Capt. William Shultz said Mayewski harassed the witness, a 15-year old girl, as she was leaving Central Court with Assistant District Attorney Tim Doherty. The girl also claimed Mayewski harassed her while she was in school at Greater Nanticoke Area, Shultz said.

"When the witness was leaving Central Court with Tim Doherty ... the witness was confronted by the defendant who made various comments to her," Shultz said.

The girl was allegedly harassed at Central Court on Dec. 18 after she testified during the preliminary hearing for Mayewski's brother, Norman Mayewski.

Doherty prosecuted Norman Mayewski at the hearing that was attended by his family, including Kevin Mayewski.

"Right after the hearing, we were walking out when (Kevin) called her a snitch; he repeatedly called her a snitch," Doherty said. "He knew who I was since I had prosecuted the brother."

Shultz and county Det. Lt. Deborah Parker investigated the alleged harassment against the girl.

Norman Mayewski, 23, of East Main Street, Nanticoke, and Kevin Mayewski were charged by Nanticoke police in October as a result of an undercover drug investigation.

According to the criminal complaints:

Norman Mayewski sold crack and heroin to an informant and was found in possession of anabolic steroids during a search at his home. When police stopped his car to arrest him on Oct. 22, Norman Mayewski gave the girl – a passenger in his car – an altered soda can that contained crack, the criminal complaints state.

Kevin Mayewski was charged with possession of a controlled substance and prohibited offensive weapons. Police said Kevin had a bag of marijuana and a sawed-off shotgun inside the East Main Street home. He waived charges to county court during a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Dec. 18.

While Norman Mayewski was out on bail, police arrested him on Nov. 23 in connection to kidnapping and assaulting the girl.

The girl testified that she was forced into a car by Norman Mayewski and assaulted.

A preliminary hearing for Kevin Mayewski on charges he harassed the girl is scheduled for Jan. 2 at Central Court.

12/19/2007

Lawyers clash over testimony from teen

Preliminary hearing for man facing kidnap and drug charges includes flare-up.

elewis@timesleader.com

Opposing attorneys got into a heated exchange during Tuesday's preliminary hearing for a Nanticoke man charged with kidnapping a teen girl and selling illicit drugs to a police informant.

Attorney Joseph Sklarosky Sr. challenged the credibility of the 15-year-old after she admitted to lying to police about concerns her boyfriend, Norman W. Mayewski, would kill her.

The hearing for Mayewski, 23, of East Main Street, was held in Central Court before District Judge Andrew Barilla Jr. Sklarosky introduced statements the girl made while seeking a protection-from-abuse order against Mayewski, raising a protest from Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Tim Doherty.

Doherty objected to using the PFA. That's when the two attorneys began arguing, with Sklarosky asking Doherty from which law school he graduated.

Barilla settled the dispute between the lawyers by asking the girl if she ever felt threatened by Mayewski.

When she said no, Barilla dismissed a single count of terroristic threats against Mayewski.

But, Mayewski is still headed for county court. Barilla ordered him to court on charges of kidnapping, retaliation against a witness, simple assault, stalking, three counts of possession of a controlled substance and two counts of possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance.

Nanticoke police Sgt. Joseph Gydosh testified he used an informant to buy crack from Mayewski on April 13, and three bags of heroin and crack from Mayewski on June 6.

When police stopped Mayewski's car on Oct. 22 on East Broad Street, Mayewski gave his 15-year-old girlfriend a soda can containing crack. The girl testified she knew crack was inside the can when police stopped the car.

"He told me to take the can and I put it in my book bag. I didn't want him to get in trouble," the girl testified.

After Mayewski was arrested, Gydosh said authorities searched his home, where they allegedly found steroids in a lock box, a video surveillance system and drug paraphernalia used to package illicit drugs.

The girl testified Mayewski called her and she agreed to meet him outside her home on Nov. 23. When the teen went outside, Mayewski assaulted her and forced her into his car, she claimed.

According to her testimony, Mayewski drove her to an area beneath the West Nanticoke-Nanticoke Bridge where he assaulted her a second time. He then drove to Interstate 81 where he threatened to harm himself, then drove to a relative's home in Nanticoke, where the girl said she escaped.

The girl said she suffered injuries to her head, eyes and upper body.

Mayewski remains jailed at the county correctional facility for lack of \$250,000 bail.

12/6/2007

Two men charged in Nanticoke home invasion waive hearing

Edward Lewis - Times Leader

Two men from New York City waived their right to a preliminary hearing in Central Court Thursday in connection to an armed home invasion in Nanticoke two months ago.

Nanticoke police alleged Ronald Braxton, 26, Reuben O'Neal, 23, both from Brooklyn, and Levi Howard, 34, of Upper Darby, forced their way inside a home on West Main Street on Oct. 17.

Police said in arrest papers that the three men planned the robbery while in Brooklyn when they were told by another person that the home was a drug house, and that there was \$200,000 hidden in a floor.

Police allege the three men forced their way inside the home armed with guns, and held several people against their will. O'Neal fled when he saw police approach the home. He was arrested after a short foot chase.

Braxton and Howard drove back to Brooklyn only to return later that night to pick up O'Neal, who they didn't know was in police custody.

Braxton and Howard were arrested when police saw them driving in Nanticoke.

Braxton waived three counts each of criminal attempt to commit theft, criminal conspiracy to commit theft, criminal conspiracy and two counts of robbery to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

O'Neal waived two counts each of robbery and criminal conspiracy, and one count each of burglary and criminal trespass to the court of common pleas.

A preliminary hearing for Howard on charges of robbery, theft and criminal conspiracy was continued when his attorney, Shelley Centini, said she had a conflict representing him.

Centini, a conflict lawyer, said she had previously represented one of the victims in the case.

Howard's preliminary hearing was continued to Jan. 7.

11/27/2007

Nanticoke man faces kidnapping, other charges

A Nanticoke man faces charges of kidnapping, stalking, simple assault, retaliation against a witness and terroristic threats after an incident on Friday, police said.

Norman Mayewski, 23, allegedly committed the acts against his teenage ex-girlfriend, who is a witness against him in a court case, police said.

According to arrest papers, police arrived at the girl's house to find her swollen and bruised. The girl, who is under 18, told police she got a call from Mayewski at approximately 5 p.m. She told him she was going to get in trouble for talking to him, then ended the call.

Mayewski called her back, telling her, "Come for a walk with me or I am going to kill you."

The girl said she was scared Mayewski would make good on his threat, so she met him in an alley behind her house. He asked her to go for a ride, and when she said she wouldn't, Mayewski pulled her hair, shoved her to the ground and kicked her in the stomach, police said.

The girl yelled for help, and Mayewski forced her to go with him in a Chevrolet Blazer he had parked nearby. While driving off-road beneath the West Nanticoke bridge, Mayewski hit the girl in her upper left cheek and eye area, saying, "You snitched on me," police said.

Mayewski drove on Interstate 81 and stopped at the Sugar Notch exit, threatening to jump off the bridge into traffic. He drove to his house. Mayewski's uncle was home, and when the girl, crying, asked him for a ride, Mayewski said no. The girl ran from the house when Mayewski was in the kitchen. She went to a friend's relative's house, and they drove her home where she told her mother what had happened.

Mayewski was arraigned in front of Magisterial District Judge Diana Malast of Plains Township. He is in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$5,000 and \$250,000 bail.

A hearing is scheduled for Dec. 5 at central court in Wilkes-Barre.

11/16/2007

Nanticoke police release description of alleged LCCC assailant

By Bob Kalinowski CV

Nanticoke police have released a description of the man who reportedly tried to abduct a female student Tuesday at Luzerne County Community College.

The assailant was described as a white male, approximately 6-feet tall and 200 pounds. He had brown hair and was wearing a red and orange checkered jacket.

The student said the unidentified man approached her while she was walking behind the campus center to her car and made a comment. He then grabbed her from behind and tried to pull her toward him, according to a college advisory.

College officials have increased security on campus and are telling students to walk to their cars in groups. Anyone with information should call Det. Kevin Grevera at 735-2200.

10/24/2007

Two men are arrested on drug charges in Nanticoke

jgrad@timesleader.com

City police said they were on the way to search a home for illegal drugs Monday when they encountered one of the suspects driving down East Broad Street.

The police pounced and arrested Norman Mayewski, 23, on the scene. Police alleged that Mayewski, who had \$1,273 in cash on him, gave a girl in the vehicle with him his cell phone and a large quantity of crack cocaine when he was being stopped by officers. The crack cocaine was in a large single piece with a few broken-off pieces. The bag was in a false soda can that also contained pills that have not yet been identified, according to arrest papers.

At 9:30 p.m. Monday, detectives and officers searched Mayewski's home at 670 E. Main St. The search, according to arrest papers, turned up illegal steroids, a digital scale with white powder residue, a Dell computer linked to video cameras on the exterior of the residence, a cell phone, a scanner tuned to the Nanticoke police frequency and a sandwich bag containing an unidentified white liquid.

Mayewski was charged with four felony drug violations.

Nanticoke police already had arrest warrants for Mayewski for trafficking cocaine.

In another bedroom in the house, police said they found Kevin Mayewski, 18, who admitted that he was in possession of

a bag of marijuana and a loaded sawed-off shotgun. The shotgun was found in a dresser drawer, according to arrest papers.

Kevin Mayewski was charged with possession of a prohibited offensive weapon without being authorized by law and a drug offense.

Both men are being held at the county prison. Norman Mayewski was arraigned before District Judge James Tupper. He has two separate bail amounts – one for \$15,000 and one for \$10,000. His preliminary hearing is set for 9 a.m. Oct. 31 at Central Court.

Kevin Mayewski was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker, who set bail at \$2,000 and scheduled his preliminary hearing for Oct. 31 at Central Court.

10/24/2007

Nanticoke man leads police on multi-town chase

By jgrad@timesleader.com

A man accused of stealing an Xbox 360 and four video games led police on a high-speed pursuit Tuesday that began at Harveys Lake and ended in a chase on foot after a crash in Plains Township.

Timothy Shaw, 24, of 163 E. Broad St., Nanticoke, who was wanted by the Luzerne County Sheriff's Department for failing to return from work release, was identified by police officers. Shaw was driving a teal Chevrolet Blazer on state Route 415. When police attempted a traffic stop, Shaw accelerated the vehicle and merged onto state Route 309 at a rate of 90 mph, according to arrest papers.

Topping out at 100 mph, Shaw then made his way to Interstate 81 northbound, passing a vehicle on the shoulder and risking the lives of multiple motorists, police said. Shaw got off I-81 at the Jenkins Township exit, driving over the median of state Route 315 and headed south on the roadway.

Shaw was then being chased by state police from the Wyoming and Dunmore barracks as well as police from Harveys Lake, Dallas borough, Jenkins Township, Laflin and Plains Township.

Shaw then turned off Route 315, crashing into an embankment in a wooded area of Ridgewood Road, police said. Shaw fled on foot after the crash into the woods, police said. He was apprehended by a state trooper from the Dunmore barracks.

Shaw faces multiple charges of recklessly endangering another person; theft by unlawful taking; resisting arrest or other law enforcement; driving on roadways laned for traffic; driving a vehicle at an unsafe speed; failing to yield to a vehicle from the opposite direction; failing to yield for stop signs; careless driving; fleeing or attempting to elude police officers.

Shaw was arraigned before District Judge James Tupper.

10/22/2007

Breaking News: Nanticoke police seek information on drive-by shooting 5:39 p.m.

By Bob Kalinowski - CV

Nanticoke police are investigating a drive-by shooting that wounded a 22-year-old Wilkes-Barre man Sunday night on the 1300 block of Prospect Street.

Investigators say they are looking for a blue Ford Focus that fled the shooting.

About five or six gunshots were fired from the vehicle that a witness said was occupied by three males and one female, according to police.

A bullet clipped the victim in the shoulder.

"That area is very populated. Everybody in that area is a victim, too," said Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz. "We're going to do everything we can to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice."

Police said the victim was in the passenger seat of a vehicle parked near the 400 Club. He and the driver were waiting for a female when the Ford Focus pulled alongside around 8:30 p.m. and began firing.

Three bullets hit the vehicle. One passed through the windshield, and struck the victim in the shoulder. If the victim had not ducked, the injuries would have been worse, Shultz said. The driver was uninjured.

Shultz said the victim and driver of the targeted vehicle have not been cooperative. After the shooting, they did not call police and later showed up at Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre Hospital.

Neither the victim's names, nor the driver's, were released. Police didn't say if they had any suspects.

Those with information about the shooting should call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

10/18/2007

Three charged in Nanticoke home invasion robbery 4 p.m.

By Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Three men have been arrested in connection with a Wednesday morning home invasion robbery at 417 W. Main St., Nanticoke police said.

The suspects, arrest papers say, were lured to the home because there purportedly was "hundreds of thousands of dollars" hidden in the floor.

Police charged Ruben O'Neal, 23, and Ronald Braxton, 26, both of Brooklyn, and Levi Howard, 34, of Upper Darby with the robbery.

According to police:

Investigators say the trio stormed into the home of Jesse Edwards and family with guns around 11:30 a.m. and threatened to kill everyone if they didn't get money. A family friend, Louis Graziano, then stopped by with his young children and they were forced into the home at gunpoint.

Unbeknownst to the suspects, a family member managed to call police. Instead of the hordes of cash they expected, the men fled with \$200 and a video game system.

O'Neal jumped off a porch roof as cops arrived, and was caught a short time later.

Braxton and Howard fled in a silver car back to Brooklyn, but returned to Nanticoke later in the day to find O'Neal.

They were eventually caught Wednesday night after being involved in a disturbance at the 508 E. Main St. home of Bethany Simpson. Police say Simpson told the men of the vast amounts of money allegedly stashed in the Main Street home.

The three are jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

10/18/2007

Cops: Drugs the motive behind purse snatching

Two men charged with taking senior's purse as she crossed the street in Nanticoke.

elewis@timesleader.com

Money to buy heroin appears to be the reason why two men allegedly attempted to steal a purse from a senior citizen in Nanticoke on Tuesday, police said.

Police said Raymond Thomas Rittenhouse, 20, grabbed the woman's purse as she crossed South Prospect Street on her way home in Oplinger Towers around 2 p.m.

The woman fell to the ground as Rittenhouse struggled to get the purse strap off her shoulder.

Two men standing nearby, Duane Potoeski and Steven Prenties, heard the woman scream and chased after Rittenhouse, who jumped in a Chevrolet Cavalier driven by James R. Franco.

Police said Rittenhouse and Franco, 29, planned to rob the woman of her purse for money to buy heroin. After they were arrested, police said they learned the two men had stolen a purse from a supermarket and used money to buy heroin.

Rittenhouse, whose last known address was Orchard Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts of criminal attempt to commit robbery, and one count each of conspiracy to commit robbery, conspiracy to commit theft, criminal attempt to commit theft and simple assault.

Franco, of Center Street, Hanover Township, was charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit robbery and a single count of conspiracy to commit theft.

Both men were jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail each.

According to the criminal complaints filed by detectives William Shultz and Kevin Grevera, and patrolman Brian Kivler:

Rittenhouse told police he was with Franco earlier on Tuesday, and both were "dope sick" from heroin withdrawal. They needed money to buy heroin and planned to steal a purse.

As they drove around Nanticoke, they saw the elderly woman carrying a purse. Rittenhouse got out of the car, approached the woman and grabbed the purse, causing the woman to fall to the ground.

Potoeski and Prenties told police that Rittenhouse "tackled" the woman.

Police didn't say if the woman suffered any injuries. She returned home after the robbery attempt.

After the failed attempt in Nanticoke, Rittenhouse admitted to police that he stole a purse from a woman outside a

Hanover Township supermarket as Franco drove around the parking lot. They used the money to buy heroin in Wilkes-Barre, the criminal complaints say.

A preliminary hearing for both men is scheduled for Oct. 24 in Central Court.

10/12/2007

Two charges dropped

By James Comnay - CV

A former Greater Nanticoke Area School District principal is expected to enter a Luzerne County probation program for first-time offenders after allegedly helping a fugitive elude capture by deputy sheriffs.

Thomas J. Kubasek, the 55-year-old retired high school administrator and educator, had a preliminary hearing Thursday in Luzerne County central court. Charges of hindering apprehension of a fugitive and giving false statements to law enforcement were dropped. A disorderly conduct charge remains against the Newport Township resident.

10/9/2007

Driver narrowly misses death

By bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

A train rammed a vehicle Monday morning in Nanticoke when the unsuspecting driver mistakenly entered at the railroad crossing on Lower Broadway Street.

Police said 66-year-old Arden Kessler was lucky to escape with just some bruises.

The train smashed into the rear of his Toyota Highlander, missing a direct blow to the front driver's side by mere feet.

"I'm one of the lucky ones," Kessler said in a phone interview Monday afternoon from his Hunlock Creek home. "I didn't break anything, but I'm awful sore."

Other factors working in Kessler's favor. The train was traveling slower than usual, around 15 to 20 miles per hour, and the engine was only pulling three cars and a caboose, said Nanticoke police Sgt. Mike Roke.

Witnesses told police Kessler failed to notice the flashing safety gates being drawn down on each side of the road, and didn't stop until he passed underneath. That placed him in the train's path.

"He realized he was too far forward and he gunned it. The train just clipped the back of his vehicle," said Joe McGuire, owner of nearby Mac's Auto Co.

Kessler was driving into Nanticoke after traveling over the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke Bridge from Plymouth Township. The train, pulling equipment to service some parts of the track, was traveling west.

"I guess he wasn't paying attention. By the time he realized where he was, it was too late," Roke said.

Kessler was groggy, but conscious and alert when medical crews arrived. He was taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, where he was treated and released.

When contacted at his house, Kessler blamed the sun for the crash.

"I could not see. It was blinding. I couldn't see the gate until it was coming down on my windshield," Kessler said.

10/5/2007

Nanticoke police investigate home burglary

Nanticoke police are investigating a burglary that occurred Wednesday in the 600 block of Mack Street.

The homeowners returned at approximately 8:07 p.m. to find the suspect still in their home, police said.

He fled through a laundry room door and ran into a wooded area near the John S. Fine High School and East Main Street.

The suspect entered the house by breaking a double-pane window, then forced open the laundry room door.

The victims are determining whether anything was stolen from their home, police said.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

10/3/2007

Ex high school principal arrested

By bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com and eskrapits@citizensvoice.com

A former area high school principal was arrested Tuesday for helping a wanted fugitive elude sheriff's deputies during a

daylong manhunt, authorities said.

Investigators said former Greater Nanticoke Area High School Principal Thomas J. Kubasek played a big role in the suspect, Jared S. Amoroso, being able to avoid capture.

Kubasek is Amoroso's landlord.

Amoroso is wanted by police in three counties. Luzerne County sheriff's deputies came to his 363 N. Washington St., Wilkes-Barre, apartment at 11:17 a.m. Tuesday to arrest him. The 27-year-old, dressed only in shorts, subsequently jumped out a third-story window to a neighboring roof, then jumped down 40 feet to the ground, where he fled and got into a waiting vehicle.

He managed to elude authorities throughout several municipalities all day, and was not in custody by nightfall. Police say Kubasek was the reason.

"He was playing dumb with us," said sheriff's deputy Jennifer Roberts, who made the arrest with deputy Brian Szumski.

"He said he didn't know where (Amoroso) was, but he was on the phone with him the whole time.

"He said he cared about this individual and didn't want to see him get hurt. Now, he's going to end up in jail over this," Roberts added.

Kubasek, 55, of Hemlock Street, Newport Township, faces charges of hindering apprehension of a fugitive, giving false statements to law enforcement, and disorderly conduct.

According to the police report, Amoroso was in the shower when the deputies came to arrest him. Other tenants in the building supplied Kubasek's phone number to the deputies, so, as landlord, Kubasek could open the door.

Kubasek allegedly called Amoroso to tell him he was going to be arrested, which led to Kubasek's disorderly conduct charge. He kept in phone contact with Amoroso, and deputies learned he planned to bring the fugitive money, clothes, and Amoroso's dog.

Deputies arrested Kubasek on Young Street in Hanover Township, directly next to a wooded area where Amoroso was last seen. Kubasek had Amoroso's clothing, dog, and dog food in the front seat of his car, deputies said.

He was arraigned in front of Magisterial District Judge Michael Dotzel, who imposed \$2,500 cash bail and forbade contact with Amoroso.

Kubasek was lodged in Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of bail. He has a hearing in Central Court Oct. 11 at 11 a.m.

He was the principal at Greater Nanticoke Area High School for several years. In June 2005, he was reassigned to K.M. Smith Elementary School, retiring at the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Amoroso is wanted by the sheriff's department for driving under the influence, and by Wilkes-Barre Township on other charges. He's also wanted on a parole violation out of Warren County and in Erie County on a warrant for DUI, fleeing and eluding police, reckless endangerment, and traffic violations.

Police said they had talked to Amoroso on his cell phone, and had him close to surrendering several times.

"He's basically a scared kid," Roberts said.

Kubasek initially helped police by calling Amoroso while in custody, but then refused to cooperate.

Anyone with information about Amoroso's whereabouts is asked to call 911.

10/3/2007

Convicted sex offender pleads not guilty

By bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

A convicted sexual offender from Nanticoke indicted in September for trying to entice a minor to perform sexual acts pleaded not guilty Tuesday in federal court.

Robert W. Davis, 48, entered his plea during his initial appearance and arraignment at the Max Rosenn Federal Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre.

Davis, of Phillips Street in the Hanover section of Nanticoke, allegedly used a computer and telephone to "persuade, induce and entice" a minor to travel from Colorado to Pennsylvania "to engage in prostitution and sexual acts." He also had pictures on his computer of minors performing sex acts, authorities said.

Davis was convicted of a similar charge in 2002 in Albany County, N.Y., court records show. He is listed as a sexual offender on the Pennsylvania State Police Megan's Law Web site, which is a database of convicted sexual offenders accessible to the public.

10/2/2007 - CV

Sex offender faces federal indictment for enticing minor, pornography possession

By bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

A man already classified as a sexual offender in Pennsylvania is facing a federal indictment for trying to entice a minor to perform sexual acts and for possessing pornography involving minors, according to court records. Robert W. Davis, 48, is scheduled to be arraigned this afternoon in front of U.S. District Judge Malachy Mannion in the Max Rosenn Federal Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre.

Davis, of Phillips Street in the Hanover section of Nanticoke, was indicted federally on Sept. 18.

According to the indictment, Davis used a computer and telephone to "persuade, induce and entice" a minor to travel from Colorado to Pennsylvania "to engage in prostitution and sexual acts." He also had pictures on his computer of minors performing sex acts, authorities said.

The alleged crimes occurred between July 4 and Sept. 12 in Luzerne County, investigators said.

Davis was convicted of a similar charge in 2002 in Albany County, N.Y., court records show.

He is listed as a sexual offender on the Pennsylvania State Police Megan's Law Web site, which is a database of convicted sexual offenders accessible to the public.

Davis remains jailed in the Lackawanna County Prison.

9/21/2007 - TL

Two men were arrested Wednesday in connection with the theft of copper pipe from a house on Park Street.

Scott George Eddy, 35, of Summit Street, Edwardsville, and Thomas Patrick Atchue, 35, of Larksville, were each charged with burglary, criminal trespass, criminal conspiracy, criminal mischief, possessing instruments of crime and two counts of criminal attempt. They were arraigned on the charges by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and remained jailed Thursday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail each.

According to the criminal complaint:

Eddy and Atchue told police that they had permission to be inside renovating the residence. When police spoke with the owner, police learned that the two men were stealing copper pipe.

A preliminary hearing for both men is scheduled for Sept. 27 in Central Court.

9/21/2007 - TL

A 21-year-old man was arrested early Thursday morning on charges of breaking into an apartment and on unrelated charges in connection with hiding a fugitive.

David Allen Banks, of East Green Street, was charged with burglary, criminal conspiracy and theft, and two counts of hindering apprehension or prosecution. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$7,500 bail.

According to the criminal complaints:

Witnesses told police that two men had kicked in the door and entered an apartment on South Market Street just before 1 a.m.

A boyfriend, Daniel Miller, to the female tenant arrived at the apartment and encountered Banks and the other suspect outside carrying DVDs and other items that were stolen from the residence.

Miller fought the two men who both ran away, the criminal complaints say.

Police said Banks was identified as one of the two men who burglarized the apartment. The other man hasn't been charged.

Banks is also accused of giving false information to police about the whereabouts of a fugitive who was hiding inside a residence on East Green Street on Aug. 30.

A preliminary hearing on the separate set of charges is scheduled for Sept. 27 in Central Court.

9/13/2007

A Luzerne County jury recently found Ronald M. Supkowski, 60, of East Union Street in Nanticoke guilty of pointing a gun at police.

The jury convicted Supkowski of reckless endangerment. The jury also deadlocked on charges of aggravated and simple assault, leading to Court of Common Pleas Judge Michael Toole declaring a mistrial on those charges.

Toole will sentence Supkowski on the reckless endangerment charge on Oct. 23.

Nanticoke police said they responded to Supkowski's home in November 2006 for a domestic dispute. There, Supkowski pointed a revolver at officers, police said. A struggle ensued before police disarmed Supkowski.

9/13/2007

Police: Man stole rings for his dealer

Mark Donovan of Nanticoke is charged with stealing six rings from Rainbow Jewelers.

elewis@timesleader.com

Police said Mark William Donovan wanted to help out his drug dealer by giving another person a ride to Rainbow Jewelers to buy an engagement ring.

The plan changed with Donovan, 34, fleeing the Wyoming Avenue store with six rings valued at \$10,000 and speeding away in his sister's car driven by an unknown person, police said.

Security cameras at Rainbow Jewelers cameras recorded the theft and getaway.

Minutes after police released the video to the public, Donovan was identified as the suspect, police said.

Kingston and Nanticoke police captured Donovan when he was found hiding under steps inside his sister's home on Phillips Street in Nanticoke. He was charged with theft, receiving stolen property and criminal conspiracy in connection with the daylight jewelry heist.

Nanticoke police charged Donovan with four counts of possession of a controlled substance, two counts of possession of drug paraphernalia, and a single count of the manufacture of a controlled substance. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$30,000 bail.

According to arrest papers, Donovan was given nine packets of heroin in exchange for the six stolen rings.

Nanticoke police also arrested Jerome D. Trzesniowski, 35, of Teds Lane, Hunlock Township, on unrelated charges when he was found inside the Phillips Street home soon after injecting himself with heroin.

Trzesniowski was charged with three counts of possession of drug paraphernalia and was jailed at the correctional facility for lack of \$3,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Kingston police Capt. John Jorda:

Donovan told police he purchased heroin from "his dealer" in Wilkes-Barre on Tuesday morning. His dealer, whose name remains unknown, asked Donovan if he could get a car and drive the dealer's "boy" to Rainbow Jewelers to pick up a ring for the dealer's girlfriend.

Donovan said his dealer promised to take care of him if he did the dealer the favor. Donovan got his sister's Dodge Stratus and returned to Wilkes-Barre to pick up his dealer's "boy."

The dealer's "boy" drove the car to Kingston.

A witness reported seeing the car parked in a driveway on East Bennett Street near Rainbow Jewelers.

Donovan was told to pick out a ring for \$800 and run out of the store.

After Donovan entered the store, he was shown six rings. The clerk bent over to retrieve more rings when Donovan ran out of the store just before 11:30 a.m. and got into the back seat of the car.

Donovan told police he had shaved his head after the theft so he wouldn't be recognized.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Sept. 20 in Central Court

9/12/2007

Nanticoke man arrested in jewel theft

A Nanticoke man was arrested Tuesday after police said he robbed a tray of diamond engagement rings from a borough jewelry store in broad daylight.

Mark Donovan, 34, was being processed at Kingston Police Department late Tuesday night and was expected to be arraigned afterward.

Kingston Police Capt. John Jorda said Donovan stole six diamond engagement rings from Rainbow Jewelers on Wyoming Avenue. The rings are worth \$10,000, according to a televised report. The rings were not recovered, police said.

It was unclear why Donovan stole the rings, Jorda said.

Wearing a Marines T-shirt and jeans, Donovan entered the business and asked to see engagement rings. He fled the store with six rings and sped away in a four-door car, police said.

The theft was captured by the store's surveillance system.

8/29/2007

Jeanette Marie Gilchrist, 37, of East Spring Street, was arrested Saturday after police said they found cocaine in her purse.

Times Leader

Gilchrist was charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, public drunkenness and disorderly conduct. She remained jailed Tuesday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

John Dieter told police Gilchrist pulled a knife on him while they were arguing inside her home.

Police found Gilchrist nearby, where she was arrested for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct.

Police said they found 37 packaged bags of cocaine inside her purse. Gilchrist told police she sells drugs because she needs money to pay bills, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Sept. 4 in Central Court.

8/29/2007

Richard Allen Park, 20, of West Union Street, was arrested on charges he had stolen his mother's wedding ring.

Times Leader

Park was charged with theft and receiving stolen property. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on a parole violation, according to court records.

Police said in arrest papers that Park admitted to stealing his mother's wedding ring in early August.

8/21/2007

Police arrest man on drug offenses

Times Leader

A Nanticoke man was arrested Monday night on charges he fled police after selling heroin to a man on Parrish Street, Wilkes-Barre.

Fernando Febles, 20, of Shea Street, was charged with possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and criminal attempt to sell a controlled substance. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were patrolling in the area of Parrish Street when they encountered a drug sale involving Febles and another man.

Febles fled dropping a paper towel containing 13 packages bags of heroin, police said.

Febles was able to elude police, but was seen walking a pit bull on Parrish Street looking for the paper towel that he had earlier dropped. Febles fled again and was seen running into a back door at 384 Parrish St.

Police encountered the pit bull running freely inside the home.

After the dog was secured, police found Febles hiding in a second floor bathroom.

8/11/2007

Cops say man stole copper pipes

Nanticoke police had filed burglary and related charges against Powell on July 30.

elewis@timesleader.com

A homeless man facing theft charges in connection with the theft of copper piping from vacant homes in Nanticoke faces similar charges in Plymouth.

Kristopher Alan Powell, 22, admitted to police he was stealing copper pipe from homes to support a "bundle a day" heroin addiction," according to arrest papers.

Plymouth police accused Powell of stealing copper pipe from a double-block home, under construction on Davenport Street, and a home at West Main and Blair streets. The thefts occurred July 19 to 21.

Police said each of the homes sustained water damage. The home under construction on Davenport Street sustained approximately \$10,000 in damage.

Nanticoke police had filed burglary and related charges against Powell on July 30 in connection with a break-in at a

West Ridge Street home that is being renovated; and a home that is for sale on East Grand Street. Those incidents occurred in mid-July.

Powell admitted that he sold the copper pipes at Valenti Scrapyard in Edwardsville for money to buy heroin, according to arrest papers.

His girlfriend, Jodee Marie Hattan, 28, also homeless, was charged with giving Powell a ride to the homes in Nanticoke and Plymouth in exchange for heroin.

When Plymouth police allegedly captured them in the act of stealing pipes on July 21, Powell fled on foot and ran into a home on West Main Street. As officers waited outside, Powell removed a window air conditioner and escaped custody. He was captured a short time later.

Nanticoke and Plymouth police charged Powell with 13 counts of criminal conspiracy, five counts each of burglary, criminal trespass, criminal mischief and theft, and one count each of escape and resisting arrest. He was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$125,000 bail.

Hattan was charged with criminal conspiracy, escape and resisting arrest. She is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

A preliminary hearing for Powell is scheduled in Central Court on Aug. 16.

Hattan is scheduled for a preliminary hearing in Central Court on Aug. 13.

8/7/2007

Times Leader

Eric Brain Legins, 21, of Mountain View Drive, was arrested on indecent exposure charges after he was arrested for public drunkenness on West Noble Street and exposed himself to a woman while urinating on the floor at police headquarters at 11:55 p.m. Friday.

According to court papers:

When police were dispatched to West Noble Street for reports of a fight, they observed an intoxicated Legins yelling profanities. Legins then resisted arrest, police said. When Legins arrived at police headquarters, he kicked his sneakers off, projecting them across the room at officers, police said.

After he was placed in a cellblock, he began calling out to a female jailer, exposing himself and making lewd comments toward her, police said. Legins began urinating on the floor, saying "here cleaning lady, how do ya like that," police said.

He also threatened to defecate on the floor if police refused to release him, police said.

Police said Legins then faked an asthma attack, and struggled with police.

Legins was charged with indecent exposure, open lewdness, public drunkenness, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

7/31/2007

Kingston man charged with kidnap, assault

By rlieback@timesleader.com

A Kingston man who told a 22-year-old woman that he wanted to "rearrange and mangle her face so no one will ever love her" was arrested on felony kidnapping and assault charges at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, police said.

Edwin Thomas Ourso III, 25, of Chester Street, Kingston, was arrested at an unreported Plymouth residence after the woman reported the following incident to authorities:

According to Nanticoke City Police:

After arriving at an unreported location in Nanticoke for work at 6:55 a.m., Ourso forced the woman into the passenger side of her vehicle. Ourso then entered the driver's side and drove at dangerous speeds, continually punching the woman in the face.

Ourso drove the woman to a dirt road near a cemetery and continued to beat her on the face, head, arms and legs, causing her lips to swell and bleed. After a security guard in the area noticed the incident, Ourso reversed the car from the location and forced the woman to drive.

The woman reported Ourso continued to hit her while she drove through different towns. Her vehicle broke down on Pringle Street in Kingston, and Ourso pushed the car into a parking lot off the street.

Ourso kept the woman in a headlock as they walked to Chester Street in Kingston. When they arrived at his house, Ourso kept grabbing her by the hair, hitting her on the face and head, choking her at one point.

Ourso told the woman that if she presses charges he would kill her, no matter how long it took him to get out of jail; he told her she better report that in her statement to police.

The woman said Ourso, who had been drinking heavily, then calmed down. But when she attempted to leave, he grabbed her by her hair, pushed her head into a chair and forced her upstairs. When upstairs, he pinned her down with his knees and head-butted and struck her a few times.

The woman told police that Ourso's roommate threatened to call police if he touched her again. Kingston police found the woman at the Chester Street residence, but who called police was not reported.

Plymouth police later arrested Ourso at an unknown location.

Ourso was arraigned before District Judge Joseph Carmody in West Pittston on charges of kidnapping, unlawful restraint, simple assault and terroristic threats. He was taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 straight bail for the alleged assault incidents in Kingston, and \$10,000 straight bail for the alleged kidnapping and assault incidents in Nanticoke.

Ourso was also wanted on a parole violation from the Luzerne County Adult Probation and Parole Department.

A hearing is scheduled for 9 a.m. Monday in Central Court.

7/29/2007

Homeless pair are charged in copper thefts

Nanticoke police say the pipes were stolen from vacant homes and sold at a scrapyard.

elewis@timesleader.com

A homeless man confessed to police that he had stolen copper pipes from two vacant homes to support his \$200 to \$250 a day heroin addiction, according to arrest papers.

Police on Friday filed burglary and related charges against Kristopher Alan Powell, 22, in connection to breaking into a home for sale on East Grand Street and a home under renovations on West Ridge Street. The burglaries happened sometime in the middle of July, police said.

Powell, who is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on allegations he violated parole stemming from a September 2004 robbery in Nanticoke, confessed that he forced his way inside both homes and stole copper pipes, police said.

Police said charges were filed against Jodee Marie Hattan, 28, for her role in the thefts.

Hattan, a homeless woman who sleeps inside her car, told police she gave Powell a ride to both homes.

Police said Powell and Hattan confessed that they sold the copper pipes at a scrapyard in Edwardsville and used the money for heroin.

Powell was charged with four counts of criminal conspiracy, two counts each of burglary and criminal mischief, and a single count of theft. Hattan was charged with six counts of criminal conspiracy. She is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Both were arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Friday. They were arrested July 21 by Plymouth police while investigating a rash of burglaries of vacant buildings involving copper pipe thefts in the borough. According to the criminal complaints filed by investigating officer Robert Lehman:

Hattan told police that she and Powell drove to East Grand Street and West Ridge Street in the middle of the night, thinking Powell was a plumber because he had pipe cutters. He left leaving Hattan alone inside her car.

Powell returned to the car carrying copper pipes that were sold at the Edwardsville scrap yard for \$150. He estimated he sold 75 pounds of pipe using the money to buy heroin, the criminal complaint says.

Police said both homes sustained water damage.

Powell is currently facing charges in court related to stealing an elderly woman's purse on West Main Street, Plymouth, on Feb. 8.

7/17/2007

1 stop results in multiple charges

Arrest leads to DUI, indecent exposure, resisting and other charges against W-B woman.

By Ron Liebackrlieback@timesleader.com

A 46-year-old woman was arrested on indecent exposure, drug and evidence of drunken-driving charges after police stopped her vehicle on North Walnut Street at 10 p.m. Saturday.

While being arrested, Mary Katherine Kurovsky, of 1 Harris St., Wilkes-Barre, exposed her breasts on the street,

showing herself to pedestrians and motorists, police said. Also, while in the holding cell at the police station, Kurovsky took off her pants and underwear, spread her legs in a sexual fashion exposing her genitals and made obscene comments to officers, police said.

According to court papers:

While on another call, police observed a Ford minivan operated by Kurovsky squeal the tires through a red light at the intersection of Kosciuszko and East Main streets.

Kurovsky proceeded westbound on East Main Street, illegally passing a motorcycle in an area of blind curves.

Kurovsky was then stopped on North Walnut Street, where she became combative and belligerent.

Kurovsky agreed to a breath test, but would not blow into the device as directed, making an obscene reference to a sex act at one point. Kurovsky continued to use profanities and be disorderly.

When police advised her she was under arrest, she exposed her breasts in public, and resisted arrest. Upon a search of her van, police discovered a partially consumed bottle of vodka on the driver's side floor and a cigarette pack that contained a crack-cocaine smoking pipe. Police impounded the vehicle.

While traveling to headquarters, Kurovsky began to act violently, so police advised her she was being videotaped.

While in a holding cell, she removed her pants and underwear, throwing them at police. She then exposed herself and made obscene comments.

After she calmed down, she submitted to a breath test, which showed a blood alcohol content of .057 percent. An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered intoxicated with a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 percent.

Kurovsky also freely stated that she had been using drugs. While blood tests were being performed on her at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, Kurovsky acted violently, and kicked over a metal table.

Kurovsky was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whitaker. She was charged with five counts of driving under the influence, one count of indecent exposure, one count of open lewdness, three counts of aggravated assault, three counts of simple assault, two counts of resisting arrest, and one count each of recklessly endangering another person, drug paraphernalia, disorderly conduct, careless driving and reckless driving.

7/13/2007

Murder plot charges go to trial

Cellmate testifies that man charged with rape offered him \$5,000 to kill girl involved.

elewis@timesleader.com

Handcuffed and wearing green clothing marked LCCF, inmate Joshua Vanderhoff testified that his former cellmate, Victor Keller Jr., offered him \$5,000 to kill a young girl.

Keller, 38, is facing child rape charges in Luzerne County Court on allegations he sexually assaulted a girl, now 13, in Hanover Township and Nanticoke between January 2005 and December 2006.

Vanderhoff testified that Keller wanted the girl dead so the child rape charges would "go away."

"He wanted me to kill the girl," Vanderhoff testified.

Prosecutors relied heavily upon Vanderhoff's testimony during Keller's preliminary hearing before District Judge Paul Hadzick in Central Court. After nearly 40 minutes of testimony, Hadzick forwarded a single count of solicitation to commit criminal homicide against Keller to court.

Keller remains jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$200,000 bail.

His attorney, Paul Galante, questioned the credibility of Vanderhoff, who admitted being a recovering heroin addict and facing his own set of burglary and retail-theft charges.

Shortly after Vanderhoff was released on bail from the county prison in March, he fled to Florida, where he was arrested in June for missing a court hearing in Luzerne County.

Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts said she is confident Vanderhoff will continue to cooperate with authorities.

During his testimony, Vanderhoff said he was a cellmate with Keller for about two weeks in January and February.

During that time, Keller said he was being "screwed over and that he is innocent of all the (rape) charges," Vanderhoff testified.

Vanderhoff said Keller approached him with an offer to get someone to post \$1,300 bail in order for Vanderhoff to get released from jail in February, and a promise of \$5,000 after the girl was dead.

Vanderhoff, who said he had never seen the girl, testified Keller told him the girl's name, described her appearance, where she lived, and gave instructions to "kill" the girl, making it look like an accidental drug overdose.

Keller approached Vanderhoff several times inside county prison in February to see if he was interested in acting out his plan, Vanderhoff testified.

Vanderhoff said he told another inmate and a correctional officer.

Nanticoke police Detective Capt. Bill Shultz, who arrested Keller on the rape charges, was told about Keller's plot and asked that the state police Organized Crime Unit assist in the investigation.

Keller is scheduled to be formally arraigned on the solicitation to commit criminal homicide on Oct. 19.

7/11/2007 01:42 PM

Kingston man arrested in connection to Nanticoke armed robbery

Nanticoke police arrested a man in connection to an armed robbery at the Uni Mart on Middle Road in May.

Michael D. Johnson, 27, of South Gates Avenue, Kingston, was charged with two counts of robbery, and one count each of theft and receiving stolen property. He was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 19.

According to the criminal complaints:

Johnson admitted that he used a stolen .22 caliber handgun to rob the Uni Mart on May 30.

Police arrested Johnson on Tuesday after seeing him drive a car on Middle Road.

Johnson was stopped near the Hanover Industrial Estates. Police recovered a handgun from a passenger in the car.

Johnson told police that he used the handgun during the robbery.

Police said the handgun was reported stolen to Wyoming police on April 12.

7/10/2007

Man gets 14 to 28 years in rape of pre-teen girl

By David Weissdweiss@timesleader.com

Saying Christopher John Peters had "little redeeming factors," a judge on Monday sentenced the Wilkes-Barre man to 14 to 28 years in state prison for repeatedly raping a 12-year-old girl.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. sentenced Peters on one count of rape of a child and one count of another sexual offense.

Nanticoke police said Peters, 39, repeatedly assaulted the girl, who was known to him, inside an Apollo Circle residence. The assaults began when the girl was 11 and occurred between December 2005 and December 2006, according to police. Peters had intercourse with the girl at least five times, police said.

Peters pleaded guilty in February.

On Monday, Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts asked Olszewski to level a heavy sentence because Peters was unremorseful and downplayed the offense by claiming the contact was consensual, not a case of rape.

Peters on Monday apologized and said he realized his actions hurt many people.

Olszewski deemed Peters a sexually violent predator under Megan's Law.

The judge, at the prosecution's request, ordered Peters to register his address with police for the rest of his life, to have no contact with the victim or any minors, stay out of public parks and pools, playgrounds, school zones, or anywhere else children congregate.

Peters was taken back to prison after court Monday.

6/28/2007

Man sought after high-speed chase

Times Leader

Police are searching for Zachary George Hallas, 24, of West Ridge Street, in connection with an early Wednesday morning, high-speed pursuit.

The pursuit, which reached speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour, began at about 12:35 a.m. when Sgt. Joseph Guydosh was in the area of Alden Manor on Middle Road when a motorcycle passed him at a high rate of speed. There was a passenger aboard the motorcycle.

Guydosh recognized the motorcycle and the driver as Hallas, who police said has a suspended license and is not permitted to operate a vehicle.

Guydosh pursued Hallas on Middle Road with the vehicles reaching speeds of more than 100 mph. The motorcycle passed through two intersections controlled by steady yellow flashing signals.

Hallas refused to stop and turned onto Kosciuszko Street, police said.

Officer Brian Kivler joined in the pursuit, following Hallas, who turned onto East Washington Street.

Police lost sight of Hallas in the area of South Walnut Street.

Video cameras mounted inside both police cruisers recorded the pursuit, police said.

Police filed an arrest warrant for Hallas with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on Wednesday.

Charges of recklessly endangering another person, fleeing or attempting to elude police and four traffic offenses were filed against Hallas.

6/27/2007

Cops: Man assaulted an officer in Nanticoke

Police say Thomas Seesoltz III was going to sniff gas and he tried to disarm them.

Times Leader

Thomas Thurston Seesoltz III, 34, of West South Street, was arrested on charges he fought with officers who stopped him from sniffing gasoline early Sunday morning.

Seesoltz was charged with aggravated assault, criminal attempt, disarming law enforcement officer, resisting arrest, illegal use of solvents and public drunkenness. He remained jailed Tuesday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Sgt. Joseph Gydosh:

Police saw Seesoltz walking with a gasoline container into the woods near the Turkey Hill on West Main Street at about 1:40 a.m. Sunday.

Seesoltz told police he was going into the woods to start a fire. He appeared intoxicated and had no wood for a fire.

Police said Seesoltz had planned to inhale the gasoline, a process called huffing.

Seesoltz fought with the officers after he refused to keep his hands on the police cruiser. He attempted to grab an officer's baton and flashlight and managed to get a can of pepper spray from an officer during a struggle.

Police from Newport Township assisted Nanticoke police in apprehending Seesoltz.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 2 in Central Court.

6/14/2007

Nanticoke man arrested on charges linked to 'club drug'

He was previously convicted of distributing anabolic steroids.

Terrie Morgan-Besecker - Times Leader

A Nanticoke man who was previously convicted of distributing anabolic steroids and Ecstasy was arrested Wednesday by federal agents on a charge of conspiracy to distribute a tranquilizer that's a popular "club drug."

Peter Sepling, 36, was among two people arraigned Wednesday afternoon on a criminal complaint filed by the U.S. Attorney's office. The complaint alleges Sepling and the other man, Dean Williamson, no age or address available, conspired with unnamed others to distribute Ketamine.

Sepling's arrest comes six years after he pleaded guilty in Luzerne County Court in connection with a large-scale drug ring that sold Ecstasy, another popular club drug, throughout Luzerne County. He was sentenced in November 2001 to one to two years in prison.

Sepling also pleaded guilty in Lackawanna County Court to distributing anabolic steroids. He was sentenced in January 2001 to six to 23 months in prison for that case, court records show.

Ketamine, known by the street name "Special K," is a tranquilizer most commonly used on animals, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency Web site. The drug, popular among teens and adults and at dance clubs and "raves," can be injected or consumed orally, most commonly by mixing it in drinks.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Houser said he could not provide any details regarding the investigation that led to the arrests of Sepling and Williamson. The charge carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine. Sepling and Williamson were each released under conditions following their arraignment before U.S. District Magistrate Judge Malachy Mannion. Both were ordered not to speak to any co-defendants in the case and to remain under the supervision of the federal probation office.

6/8/2007

Drug suspect still faces charges

Victor Ortiz, 34, is serving time in Lehigh County and awaits trial on other charges.

dweiss@timesleader.com

The suspected large-scale drug dealer who avoided prosecution in Luzerne County still faces a slew of drug charges in Allentown, a Lehigh County Prison official said.

Victor Ortiz, 34, is serving an 11- to 23-month sentence on drug charges in the prison and is awaiting trial on a list of other charges, the official said.

A Luzerne County judge on Monday ordered Ortiz to be taken back to the Lehigh County Prison after local prosecutors said they would not be prosecuting Ortiz on any of his drug charges because they failed to take him to trial on time.

Luzerne County prosecutors dropped a total of 20 charges – including 17 felonies – that were filed against Ortiz in connection with a Nanticoke-based drug ring. Several of the charges carried mandatory minimum jail sentences.

Police said Ortiz and Marcus Suarez were transporting large amounts of heroin and crack cocaine from Allentown to Nanticoke to sell. Suarez was sentenced in March to 14 to 28 years in state prison for his role in the ring.

But court papers filed by Ortiz, acting as his own attorney, indicate he believed his charges should be dismissed because he was not tried within 365 days of the filing of the charges, as state law requires.

Prosecutors at a hearing on Monday dismissed the charges.

District Attorney David Lupas has not returned repeated calls for comment on the case this week.

Nanticoke Sgt. Joe Guydosh, one of the key officers in the investigation, said he's not sure who's at fault in the case. He said it seemed like confusion developed between officials in Luzerne and Lehigh counties.

Guydosh said Ortiz was initially picked up in Lehigh County. Nanticoke police went there to pick him up and have him arraigned on the local charges. But Lehigh County officials wanted Ortiz back in their prison. Guydosh said local police took Ortiz back and that's where he remained.

Last week, an official with the District Attorney's Office called Nanticoke police and told them about throwing out Ortiz's charges because of the speedy-trial issue, Guydosh said.

"It's not like we're mad at anybody," he said. "It just seems like it slipped through the cracks."

Ortiz's case is the latest in a series of cases in Lupas' office to encounter problems with the speedy-trial law.

Some of Ortiz's Lehigh County charges are identical to the charges he had faced in Luzerne County.

6/7/2007

Nanticoke police seek robbery suspect

Times Leader staff



Image shows the alleged robber of the Middle Road Uni-Mart.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

City police released a surveillance picture on Wednesday of a man who they believe robbed the Middle Road Uni-Mart at gunpoint on May 30.

According to police, a man entered the store at about 10:30 p.m. with a black or dark gray revolver within his waistband. He demanded money from the store clerk and fled in a dark-colored vehicle.

The suspect is described as a black male with a thin beard, 6 feet tall with a thin build, weighing about 200 pounds. Anyone with information is asked to call police at 735-2200.

6/7/2007

Authorities allege girls, 8 and 9, were threatened and neglected in Nanticoke home Dad and girlfriend charged with abuse

elewis@timesleader.com

A veteran detective called it one of the most horrific cases he's ever investigated.

A father and his girlfriend were arrested Wednesday on charges they threatened to kill his two daughters for having spilled cereal and failing to clean up after their dog. The girls, ages 9 and 8, told police the two adults had stapled their hair to a wall, boarded up their bedroom windows and placed a lock on the refrigerator forcing them to feed themselves, according to arrest papers.

"It's quite disturbing what we learned," Detective William Shultz said.

Brian Edward Strait, 32, and Allison N. Birt, 28, of Deer Lake Drive, Hunlock Township, were arrested Wednesday after a hearing in Luzerne County Court.

Strait and Birt were charged with two counts each of endangering the welfare of children. Strait was also charged with a single count of simple assault in connection with an allegation that he punched one of his daughters causing two broken ribs.

They were arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$75,000 bail each.

Shultz said the investigation is continuing with the possibility of more charges being filed against the pair.

Police allege the abuse and neglect occurred when the family lived on East Grand Street in Nanticoke in 2006. Strait and Birt have two children of their own, Shultz said.

According to the criminal complaints filed by Shultz and Luzerne County Detective Lt. Debbie Parker:

A child caseworker with the county's Children and Youth Services investigated a complaint on Sept. 20 that Strait punched his 9-year-old daughter because she didn't take the family's dog outside. Strait told the caseworker that his daughter has a "wild imagination," and that he doesn't physically discipline his children. He promised the caseworker he would take his daughter to see a doctor.

A few days later on Sept. 27, the caseworker made an unannounced visit to the home and learned Strait never took his daughter to the doctor because he doesn't have insurance. The caseworker took the child to a doctor on Oct. 13, according to the complaints.

An X-ray showed the child had two broken ribs that were in the healing process. The doctor told the caseworker that the injury was likely caused by an adult, the criminal complaint says.

Police learned that the child and her 8-year-old sister had to wake up to change and feed their infant sister because Strait and Birt refused to get out of bed in the morning.

Children and Youth Services said Strait and Birt failed to provide for their children's needs such as medical care, dental care and nutrition.

A preliminary hearing for Strait and Birt is scheduled for June 13 at Central Court.

5/31/2007

Armed robbery suspect sought in Nanticoke

City police are investigating an armed robbery that occurred Wednesday night at the Uni-Mart on Middle Road.

According to police, a black man who had a black or dark gray revolver within his waistband demanded cash from the store clerk. The suspect got into a dark-colored vehicle, which fled east on Middle Road into the Hanover Township area, police said. The vehicle did not have headlights turned on.

The suspect is described as a black man with a thin beard. He is 6 feet tall with a thin build, weighing about 200 pounds. The suspect was wearing a bright-colored striped polo shirt and dark blue or black jeans.

Anyone with any information is asked to call police at 735-2200

5/26/2007

William Haughwout, 41, of Prospect Street in Nanticoke, was sentenced Friday to 18 to 84 months in state prison plus eight years of probation for fondling a young girl.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joseph Augello sentenced Haughwout on charges of indecent assault. Police said Haughwout from September 2004 to December 2005 repeatedly fondled a 10-year-old girl in Nanticoke and Plymouth.

Haughwout was deemed a sexually violent predator and, upon his release, must register his address with police.

4/11/2007

DA: Inmate plotted to kill girl

Victor Keller charged in child's rape

elewis@timesleader.com

A Hanover Township man facing trial on child rape charges allegedly offered an inmate \$5,000 to kill the young girl so his case would go away, Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas said.

Victor Keller, 38, last known address as the Sans Souci Trailer Court, attempted to carry out his plan by soliciting help from two inmates at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, the district attorney said. He offered one of the inmates \$5,000 to kill the girl, Lupas said.

Keller denied he tried to have the girl killed as he was led to his arraignment before District Judge Martin Kane in Wilkes-Barre on Tuesday.

Keller was charged with criminal solicitation to commit criminal homicide and sent back to the county correctional facility for lack of \$100,000 bail.

Lupas said the girl and her mother were told about Keller's plot. The girl and her mother were not harmed, Lupas said. "(Keller) was looking for a way to get these (rape) charges dismissed," Lupas said. "Protecting the victim is our utmost concern."

The investigation was handled by the state police Bureau of Criminal Investigation Organized Crime Unit.

Keller has been in jail since his Jan. 19 arrest by Nanticoke and Hanover Township police on allegations he raped the girl multiple times, arrest papers say.

According to the criminal complaint filed Tuesday:

After his arrest in January, Keller told inmate Charles Handlin, 42, that he was worried about the rape charges against him. He told Handlin that he wanted to scare the girl and her mother so they wouldn't testify, and offered Handlin a 1963 Chevrolet Corvette to "beat them up" if Handlin got released from jail.

Handlin, of Hazleton, was jailed on charges he stole copper pipe from a Hazleton building in early January, according to court records.

A preliminary hearing on the rape charges against Keller was held Feb. 21 in Central Court. The 12-year-old girl testified at the hearing.

In her testimony, the girl said she was afraid to tell anyone that Keller was sexually assaulting her because Keller was abusive when drunk.

Rape and related charges against Keller were forwarded to trial in Luzerne County Court.

Several days after the preliminary hearing, Keller told inmate Joshua Vanderhoff, 20, that he didn't want to go to state prison.

Keller offered to get someone to post \$1,300 bail in order for Vanderhoff to get released from jail. Vanderhoff, of Benton, was charged by Nanticoke police in December on charges he burglarized a home and endangered a police officer.

Keller told Vanderhoff the girl's name, described her appearance, where she lived, and gave instructions to "kill" the girl and to make it look like an accidental drug overdose, the criminal complaint says.

Police said Keller offered to pay Vanderhoff \$5,000 after the girl was dead, and said the money could be picked up from a residence at the Sans Souci Trailer Park.

Keller approached Vanderhoff several times at the end of February and early March to see if Vanderhoff was still interested in acting out his plan, police said.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 19 in Central Court.

4/3/2007

County official warns of scam offers to rewrite old wills

Luzerne County Register of Wills Dorothy Stankovic issued a warning Monday about potential scam artists.

An 83-year-old Nanticoke woman contacted the Register of Wills office last week saying that an undisclosed company had requested a meeting to discuss her will, Stankovic said. The company told the woman that her will must be updated because it had expired.

The woman wanted to know if there had been any changes in laws governing wills.

Stankovic said there are no changes governing wills, and she advised anyone who receives this type of call to contact police or to call 911.

“There could be scam artists working in the area looking to get into homes under the false pretense of rewriting an old will,” Stankovic said.

4/2/2007

Police are searching for a man who robbed the Uni-Mart, 14 N. Market St., at 3:48 p.m. Sunday.

Police said the man entered the store and told the clerk he had a gun. The suspect told the clerk to put the money from the register in a plastic-type bag he had. The clerk complied but took too long, police said.

The suspect then reached over the counter and assisted the clerk in removing the money from the register. He fled with an unknown amount of money in a northwest direction and crossed Access Road into a wooded area, police said.

The suspect is described as a white man in his late teens or early 20s, about 6 feet tall and weighing between 150 and 160 pounds. He was wearing a dark-gray hooded sweatshirt with red lettering across the front and red stripes down both arms, dark colored cargo pants, dark shoes or sneakers and a gray or tan colored full stocking mask.

Anyone with information is urged to call police at 735-2200.

3/27/2007

Nanticoke principal assaulted

A 16-year-old Greater Nanticoke Area High School student assaulted Principal Mary Ann Jarolen last week, city police said.

The student was suspended from school for 10 days, and police say he now faces juvenile court charges of aggravated assault, simple assault, terroristic threats, harassment and disorderly conduct.

Nanticoke police said the male student had been kicked out of class for throwing spitballs. School officials told officers he was trying to return to the class to verbally harass the teacher when the confrontation with Jarolen occurred, police said.

Jarolen told investigators the boy grabbed her right arm, twisted it up and backward, before pushing her out of the way, police said.

The incident occurred around 1:30 p.m. on March 20.

3/27/2007

Angela Rose Chapman, 27, of Pine Street, was arrested on evidence of drunken driving charges after police said they found her in her automobile that was stuck in a snow bank on Orchard Street at 1:10 p.m. March 19.

When police approached the vehicle, Chapman locked the doors and acted as if she was not in the vehicle, police said. Chapman then shut the engine off and threw the keys on the passenger seat, police said.

After a few minutes, Chapman opened the door and exited the vehicle and became uncooperative. Police said she appeared intoxicated and on the verge of passing out. Police also said the car was not inspected.

Chapman was charged with driving under the influence, operating an vehicle without inspection and without a registration card to be signed and exhibited on demand.

3/27/2007

School bus stop incident results in charges

rlielback@timesleader.com

A 45-year-old woman was charged with ethnic intimidation after she allegedly told a woman and her two sons “all you blacks look alike” and flicked a lit cigarette at one of the boys at their bus stop at West Main and Slope streets on Thursday, according to an affidavit filed Monday at District Judge Donald Whitaker’s office.

Mary Louise Warner, of 212 Apollo Circle, on Monday denied making any racial comments, stating that she only said the two boys look like twins because they are hard to tell apart, court papers said.

According to court papers:

Tawana Simpson reported to police that her two sons were being harassed at their bus stop because they are black. Simpson and her husband, John, went to the stop Thursday and confronted Warner, who became angry.

Warner then made multiple derogatory slurs and flicked a lit cigarette at one of Simpson's sons, just missing his head. Warner stuck her middle finger in Simpson's sons' faces, called them a racial epithet and said "all you (explicative) should die."

Police spoke with Simpson's two children, whose stories matched up with their mother's. Police also spoke with two other parents at the bus stop, and both told police that they observed Warner yelling that the "black people should all die" and shouting out racial epithets to black people on street.

When questioned, Warner said she was harassed by Simpson.

Warner was charged with ethnic intimidation and harassment. She could not be reached for comment Monday.

3/22/2007

Woman gets jail time in burglary

Jessica Renee Caudill, 25, of Apollo Circle in Nanticoke, was sentenced Tuesday to two to four years in state prison for breaking into a home.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Hugh Mundy sentenced Caudill on charges of burglary, access device fraud, and unsworn falsifications in three cases.

In one case, Nanticoke police said Caudill in June broke into a South Hanover Street home and stole a video-game system, video games, a purse, and bonds.

3/16/2007

Police said someone armed with a BB gun targeted windows on cars and a home on Wednesday and Thursday.

Barbara Stanski, of Lincoln Avenue, said a window on her Dodge Caravan was smashed on Thursday.

Paul Seery, of Mountain View Drive, said a window on his Oldsmobile was smashed on Thursday.

Matthew Molski, of Stewart Drive, said door window at his home was smashed on Wednesday.

Robert Bray, of South Hanover Street, said a window on his Hyundai Elantra was smashed on Wednesday.

Joseph Kowalski, of South Hanover Street, reported that a window on his Chevrolet Tahoe was smashed on Wednesday.

David Gabel, of South Hanover Street, reported that a window on his Chevy Cavalier was smashed on Wednesday.

3/7/2007

Man blames whiskey-flavored tobacco in DUI arrest

Nanticoke man says Red Man Select caused alcohol odor on breath.

By elewis@timesleader.com

A man charged by police on evidence of drunken driving blamed a brand of chewing tobacco for leaving an alcohol odor on his breath.

Police said John Daniel Drury Sr., 42, of Pine Street, was involved in a two-car crash at Bliss and Pine streets in the city's Hanover section on Feb. 22.

Drury, driving a Dodge Ram pickup, turned onto Bliss Street and struck the front of a Chevrolet Cavalier that was stopped at a stop sign, police said.

According to the criminal complaint filed by officers Brian Kivler and Brian Williams:

Police said Drury was visibly intoxicated and had an alcohol odor on his breath.

"Drury insisted that he did not consume any alcoholic beverages and that the Red Man Select chewing tobacco that he was chewing contained an unspecified amount of Tennessee whiskey," police said in the criminal complaint.

Police said Drury failed several field sobriety tests at the crash scene. He was given a preliminary breath test that showed a level of 0.130 percent, police said.

Drury was arrested on evidence of drunken driving, and was taken to the Nanticoke Police Department, where another breath test showed a level of 0.144 percent, police said.

An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered legally intoxicated with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent.

Drury told police he would challenge his DUI arrest and wanted police to determine his chewing tobacco's alcohol content.

Drury could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.

A message to Swedish Match, the Stockholm, Sweden-based manufacturer of Red Man Select, was not returned.

But, an e-mail from the company referred questions about its ingredients in its products to its Web site.

According to the Swedish Match's Web site, the 14 different types of ingredients in Red Man Select do not contain Tennessee whiskey or any other alcohol-based substance.

3/6/2007

Marcus Suarez, 33, of Allentown, was sentenced recently to 14 to 28 years in state prison on a host of drug charges.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. sentenced Suarez on charges of criminal conspiracy, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, criminal use of a communication facility and delivery of a controlled substance in six separate criminal cases.

Police from several agencies said Suarez and another man in 2005 and 2006 were bringing large amounts of heroin and crack cocaine from the Allentown area to Nanticoke and selling it.

Police said the men sold the drugs to confidential informants outside an apartment building near the intersection of Chestnut and Noble streets in Nanticoke and at numerous hotels in the Wilkes-Barre area, police said.

2/22/2007

Girl testifies she feared reporting sex assaults

By elewis@timesleader.com

A young girl said she was afraid to tell anyone that Victor Keller Jr. was sexually assaulting her because he was abusive when he drank.

She didn't talk to authorities until Keller stopped drinking.

"He stopped drinking and I wasn't afraid of him anymore," the 12-year-old girl testified during a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Central Court on Wednesday. She was the only witness.

Whittaker ruled there is enough evidence for Keller to stand trial on two counts of rape of a child, three counts of corruption of minors, and one count each of endangering the welfare of children and indecent exposure.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts said Keller, if convicted, faces a mandatory sentence of five years in state prison.

The girl told Whittaker that Keller began sexually assaulting her when he lived in the Apollo Circle Housing Complex in Nanticoke about two years ago. At least twice he took her into his residence, where he forced her to perform lewd acts and raped her, she said.

The girl said she couldn't remember the exact dates of the assaults when asked by Keller's defense lawyer, Charles Ross.

"I told him to stop once," the girl said. "He used to drink a lot and he became aggressive when he drinks."

The girl said she was also sexually assaulted in December after Keller moved to the Sans Souci Trailer Park in Hanover Township. She said she was sleeping over at a friend's house when Keller entered the bedroom and assaulted her, she said.

Keller was arrested after a joint investigation by Hanover Township and Nanticoke police, and the district attorney's office. He remains jailed at the county correctional facility. Whittaker refused to lower Keller's bail of \$100,000.

2/09/2007

Nanticoke woman faces charges for allegedly stealing lottery tickets

A Nanticoke convenience store worker allegedly stole at least \$800 worth of lottery tickets and gave the winning ones to her boss in exchange for better working hours, police said.

Marcella Fletcher, 53, of Garfield Street, Nanticoke, faces charges of theft, tampering with records, and making false reports to law enforcement, police said.

According to police, Fahim Mirza, owner of the Uni-Mart on Market Street, told police on Jan. 15 that one of his former employees had been stealing from him.

Videotape from Dec. 24, 2006, showed Fletcher scratching off hundreds of dollars worth of lottery tickets, police said. Store manager Peggy Tweedly said Fletcher had scratched the tickets and thrown the losing ones in the trash. Tweedly reviewed the surveillance tape and reported it to Mirza, who fired Fletcher, police said.

Under police questioning, Fletcher said she took lottery tickets from Thanksgiving through Dec. 14, 2006, scratched them off, and gave the winning ones to Tweedly. Fletcher altered lottery sale records to conceal the thefts, police said.

Fletcher said Tweedly promised to adjust her working hours to better suit her if she did Tweedly a favor, namely give her \$50 to \$100 worth of lottery tickets at least twice a week, police said. Fletcher told police she scratched off at least \$800 worth of lottery tickets and gave about \$400 worth of winning tickets to Tweedly. Tweedly denied participating in the theft, and said she would take a lie detector test, police said. Tweedly asked for Fletcher to be charged with making false reports to law enforcement for telling police she was also involved.

2/3/2007

County man pleads guilty to sexually abusing girl

A Luzerne County man pleaded guilty to sexually abusing a 10-year-old girl Thursday. William D. Haughwout, 41, of Nanticoke, will face sentencing on three counts of indecent assault for molesting the girl several times in 2005. The Luzerne County District Attorney's office requested an evaluation of Haughwout as a Megan's Law offender. His next court date is set for May 25.

2/2/2007

Manhunt ends in suspect's capture

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

The man who eluded police during an hours-long manhunt Wednesday on Alden Mountain in Newport Township was arrested later that night after fleeing on foot to Wilkes-Barre ending up in the emergency room of Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre, according to the Luzerne County sheriff's department. Adam Heppding, 20, fell a few times while cops searched for him on the rugged mountain terrain behind his mother's 78 Laurel Run home in Alden. Authorities wanted Heppding on warrants that included theft and assault, but vigorously pursued him because police received tips he was armed, might have been trying to make a threat at a local high school and wanted to harm his girlfriend, police said. Sheriff's deputies said Heppding, of Wilkes-Barre, was not seriously injured, and believe he also went to the hospital because he was wet and cold. People phoned in several tips about Heppding's whereabouts, helping police track him down at Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre, the sheriff's department said. The pursuit of Heppding began around 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday when police tried to serve a warrant on Heppding. He then fled into the woods, triggering a manhunt in which authorities used a state police helicopter and a K-9 unit, police said. . Police said they saw him from a distance a few times, but never were able to track him down until the tips led them to the hospital. Heppding was sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on charges of indirect criminal contempt, resisting arrest, simple assault, disorderly conduct, harassment, theft by unlawful taking, identity theft, forgery, unlawful use of a computer, access device fraud, and violation of protection from abuse orders. He now also faces charges by Newport police.

2/1/2007

Alden man still at large after search

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

Police from multiple departments scoured a wooded area of Newport Township for hours on Wednesday looking for a fugitive they believed was armed and might be trying to harm his girlfriend. The manhunt, which included the use of a state police helicopter and a K-9 unit and caused K.M. Elementary School in Newport Township to be placed on lockdown, began around 11:30 a.m. when police went to arrest Adam Heppding at his 78 Laurel St. home in Alden, police said. As police approached the home, the 19-year-old darted for the woods of Alden Mountain, township police said. Heppding was wanted on theft, assault and various other charges. What concerned police more is what they heard he might have been planning, police said.

Police from another municipality notified Newport Township officers they received information Heppding was planning to call in a bomb threat at a school and possibly harm his girlfriend at the school, township police said. The Newport cops also were advised Heppding might have a .40 caliber glock handgun in his possession, police said. After an initial search produced no results, police went back to the station. Later in the day, they received a 911 hang-up call from Heppding's home, said Officer Levi Gibbon. When cops arrived, they encountered Heppding's mother, who said her son arrived home and said he was "freezing." She apparently phoned in the 911 call to alert cops, and Heppding fled again. He was still at large Wednesday night. Helping in the search were authorities from Nanticoke, Wright Township, state police and the Luzerne County sheriff's department.

2/1/2007

Wanted man eludes police on foot

A wanted man led law-enforcement officers on a foot pursuit Wednesday. According to a press release issued by Luzerne County Deputy Sheriff Donald Lasoski: Deputies, along with Newport Township and Nanticoke police, attempted to arrest Adam Heppding at 78 Laurel St. around 11:30 a.m. on an outstanding warrant. Heppding ran from the officers and fled into a wooded area on Alden Mountain. He is described as a white male, around 6 feet tall, weighing 170 pounds, bald, with brown hair and brown eyes. He has tattoos that read "2K4" on his left hand, "Adam" on his left forearm, and "ASH" on his right wrist. He was wearing a gray windbreaker and blue jeans. He is wanted on charges of theft, access device fraud, unlawful use of a computer, fraud, forgery, disorderly conduct, simple assault, resisting arrest, harassment, identity theft and a violation of a protection from abuse order. Township police will also be filing new charges. Anyone with information is asked to call the sheriff's department or 911. State police, along with police from Hanover and Wright townships, assisted in the search.

1/25/2007

Man arrested on kidnapping charges

Police say Lucas Aaron Delos-Rios used gun to force 18-year-old man out of a car.

By elewis@timesleader.com

Police arrested a Tioga County man late Tuesday night on charges he kidnapped a man at gunpoint. Lucas Aaron Delos-Rios, 24, of Blossburg, was captured at about 11:30 p.m. in an alley near East Church and East Noble streets while walking with James Hughes Jr., the man he is accused of kidnapping. Police said Delos-Rios accused Hughes, 18, of trying to steal \$600 from him. Delos-Rios had traveled from his home to Nanticoke Tuesday night to meet a friend, Joshua Ruminski, who needed money, police said. When Hughes left an apartment and got into a car with a woman, Delos-Rios pulled a gun and ordered Hughes from the vehicle, police said. Delos-Rios was charged with kidnapping, aggravated assault, recklessly endangering another person, terroristic threats, criminal attempt, stalking and two counts each of possession of instruments of crime and unlawful restraint. He was arraigned by District Judge Paul Hadzick and is jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail. According to the criminal complaint filed by Capt. Detective William Shultz and Patrolman Brian Kivler: Eva Masler told police she was inside a car with Ruminski while waiting for Hughes near the Eastside Apartments on East Noble Street. Hughes came out from the building and got into the car, and was being followed by Delos-Rios, who pulled a gun when Masler attempted to drive away. Delos-Rios aimed the gun at the car and ordered Hughes to get out of the car. Masler sped away and called police, who found Delos-Rios and Hughes walking in the alley. Delos-Rios told police that Ruminski called him at his home in Tioga County Tuesday morning and said he needed \$1,000 or "some people were going to kill him," the criminal complaint says. Delos-Rios said he got \$600 and drove to the CVS Pharmacy in Nanticoke where he met Ruminski and Hughes, whom he didn't know. They proceeded to Eastside Apartments where they all got out of the car.

Delos-Rios told police he walked around the back of the apartments and saw Ruminski.

Ruminski told Delos-Rios to wait because he had to go to another apartment.

As the two men spoke, Delos-Rios said he overheard Hughes on his cell phone before he disappeared from his sight. Delos-Rios said he then walked to the front of the apartment building where he saw Hughes get into a vehicle driven by Masler, the criminal complaint says.

At that point, the car began to drive away.

Delos-Rios told police he stopped the car because he felt he was being robbed and denied aiming the gun at the car.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 1 in Central Court.

1/19/2007

Man tried to sell stolen items to owner, police say

Nanticoke man didn't know victims also owned comic book store.

By elewis@timesleader.com

Police said a Nanticoke man facing trial on a burglary charge didn't know he was selling stolen collectible trading cards and comic books to the couple who actually owns the items.

Joseph Thompson, 39, of South Walnut Street, is accused of breaking into a home on East Ridge Street, owned by Joseph and Kristin Skipkoski, and stealing thousands of dollars of collectible cards and comic books on Jan. 2.

Thompson then attempted to sell the stolen items at Griffins Peak, a collectible trading card and comic store that is also owned by the Skipkoskis, police said.

"(Thompson) didn't know (Skipkoski) was the owner of the home that he burglarized," said Nanticoke police Capt.

Detective William Shultz on Thursday.

According to the criminal complaint:

Joseph Skipkoski told police that Thompson and another male came into his East Main Street trading store later on Jan. 2 and wanted to know if they were interested in buying Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Yu-Gi-Oh, Pokemon and Magic the Gathering cards.

Thompson spoke to Kristin Skipkoski who told him to come back and speak with her husband.

Thompson and the other male returned to the store the next day and sold a card in a case for \$30.

Joseph Skipkoski recognized the card and the case as one of the many collectibles that were stolen from his East Ridge Street home.

Police said Thompson was persistent in selling the cards and repeatedly contacted the Skipkoskis to see if they were interested in buying. Thompson said there were too many cards and invited the Skipkoskis to his home, the criminal complaint says.

Joseph Skipkoski told police he recognized most of the cards at Thompson's home. He purchased all the cards and comic books and then turned them over to police as evidence.

Shultz said Thompson admitted to burglarizing the Skipkoskis' home, but refused to identify the other suspect.

Police said the value of the cards and comic books is approximately \$2,000.

Prosecutors dismissed charges of theft, receiving stolen property, criminal trespass and criminal mischief during a preliminary hearing before District Judge Andrew Barilla Jr. in Central Court.

A single count of burglary against Thompson was held for trial in Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

Thompson remains jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

1/11/2007

Cops: Collectible thief tries to sell items to owner

Police said a burglar who stole collectible trading cards and comic books from a home attempted to sell the items back to the homeowner who happens to own a collectible trading card business.

Joseph Thompson, 39, of South Walnut Street, was charged with burglary, theft, receiving stolen property, criminal trespass and criminal mischief. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$10,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Joseph Skipkoski told police that Thompson and another unidentified man came into his East Main Street trading store on Jan. 2 and attempted to sell cards that were stolen from Skipkoski's East Ridge Street home. Thompson asked Skipkoski's wife, Kristin, if she was interested in buying Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Yu-Gi-Oh, Pokeman and Magic the Gathering cards.

Thompson was told to come back and speak with Joseph.

Thompson and the other man returned to the store on Jan. 3 and sold a card in a case for \$30.

Joseph recognized the card and the case was one of the many collectibles that were stolen from his home.

Police said Thompson was persistent in selling the cards and repeatedly contacted the Skipkoskis to see if they were interested in buying. Thompson said there were too many cards and invited the Skipkoskis to his home.

Joseph told police he recognized most of the cards as those that were stolen from his home. He purchased all the cards and comic books and gave them to police as evidence.

Police said Thompson admitted to burglarizing the Skipkoski home and stealing cards and other items valued at more than \$2,000. Thompson also ransacked the Skipkoski home, causing nearly \$1,000 in damage, police said.

2006

12/28/2006

Police charged a city man with burglary and other offenses after his tenants reported he had kicked in the door of their home and kicked their dog.

Daniel Drury Sr. of Pine Street was arrested at around 10:40 a.m. Monday after police responded to 128 Pine St. for a report of a burglary in progress.

Police said Megan Righter reported she and her boyfriend, William Ritchie III, heard someone attempting to break into the home and discovered Drury, Righter's landlord, standing in the living room and kicking a dog owned by Ritchie.

Police said Drury smelled of alcohol and had slurred speech, bloodshot eyes and was unsteady on his feet. A breath test showed he had a blood alcohol level of 0.226 percent.

In addition to burglary, Drury is charged with cruelty to animals and criminal trespass.

12/28/2006

A city man has agreed to plead guilty to raping a 12-year-old girl at her Nanticoke home several times this year.

Christopher John Peters, 39, of Park Avenue, waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Luzerne County Central Court on Wednesday, telling Senior District Judge Andrew Barilla Jr. he will plead guilty to rape and a sexual assault charge.

Peters is scheduled to enter his plea in Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas on Feb. 28.

Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts said that if Peters changes his guilty plea, he will face trial on a long list of felony sex offenses.

Peters was arrested by Nanticoke police on Dec. 16 after the girl claimed he raped her at least five times at her mother's apartment. She said the assaults happened when her mother was away from the apartment.

Peters, who agreed to take a voice stress test at the Wright Township police department, admitted to the allegations before the test was given, Nanticoke police said.

Attorney John Donovan represented Peters, who remains jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

12/28/2006

Nanticoke dog mauled to death by another dog

Police say a 3-year-old bichon frise was mauled to death by another dog outside a home at 169 Orchard St. on Tuesday afternoon.

The deceased dog, a female named "Fibee" owned by Mary Loke of West Washington Street, was attacked by an unknown, large black dog, possibly a poodle mix, that was accompanied by another black dog and a greyhound, police said.

Police said Loke's dog had been tied to a hand railing of a porch by her leash when the attack occurred. Evidence at the scene indicated the attacking dog grabbed Loke's dog by the neck and attempted to rip the dog from its leash.

While on scene, police said emergency crews pointed out the attacking dog, which was almost a block away. The dog fled and was last seen running through neighboring yards. Police attempted to locate the animal but were unsuccessful. Police said a copy of the report on the attack was forwarded to the state dog warden for follow-up.

12/22/2006

Nanticoke man roughed up in home invasion

By bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

Two brazen bandits forced their way inside an 85-year-old man's home Wednesday night, choked him and then robbed him of \$6,000 he had stashed for bills and Christmas gifts for his grandchildren, police and the startled victim said.

"I was sitting here and the door bell rang. As soon as I opened the door, two black guys jumped me. They choked me and drug me up to the safe in my room. I had to open it up or they would have killed me," John Miller said at his Mountain View Drive home Thursday afternoon.

"They really cleaned me out. They rushed right in here and knew what they were doing, right for the safe," Miller added.

Police say the 6:55 p.m. robbery was not a random act in the quiet residential area filled with well-kept, modern homes and sprawling lawns on the city's south side.

"They targeted him. That's the bottom line," said police Capt. William Shultz.

Investigators are theorizing people who Miller had over his house in the past knew about the safe and told the robbers. The robbery couldn't have come at a worse time, said the widowed man who lives alone. He was just getting ready to fill greeting cards with money for gifts for each of his eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. The family was supposed to have a get-together on Christmas Eve.

"The kids aren't going to get anything this year now," the distraught grandfather said.

Miller said he hopes cops track down the crooks who ruined his Christmas. He added he wishes he was armed when he answered the door. The World War II veteran and retired prison guard is licensed to carry a gun and keeps a pistol in a drawer of his living room coffee table, and a few other guns around the house he has owned for 30 years — in case something just like this happened.

"If I took that gun down there with me, I would have killed them. I hope they get them bastards," Miller said.

The suspects were in the home for about 15 minutes. Though shaken, Miller wasn't injured and did not receive any medical treatment.

Several neighbors expressed sadness for Miller, and lamented that they didn't see the home invasion occur.

Miller described one suspect as a black male, 6-feet, 2-inches tall with a large build. The other, Miller said, was a 6-foot tall black male with a medium build. Both were in their 20s and were wearing dark clothing and baseball hats, he said.

Police retrieved fingerprints from the scene, but it wasn't immediately clear if they yielded any productive results.

Anyone with information about the robbery is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

12/21/2006

Police are searching for two black men who choked and robbed an 85-year-old man at his residence, 266 Mountain View Drive, at 6:55 p.m. Wednesday.

Police said the victim was going to take a shower when he heard the door bell ring. Upon opening the door, the suspects physically forced the victim into a bedroom, police said.

Police said the victim was then forced to open a safe containing an undetermined amount of cash and personal items.

The victim was threatened, choked and thrown to the floor, police said.

The suspects then fled on foot, police said. It is unknown where they fled or if they had a vehicle.

The suspects are described as two black men in their early 20s, wearing black clothing and baseball caps. One suspect was 6 feet 2 inches tall with a large build. The other suspect was 6 feet tall with a medium build.

Anyone with information is urged to call police at 735-2000.

2/17/2006

A Wilkes-Barre man was arrested late Friday afternoon on charges he raped a 12-year old girl several times this year, police said.

Christopher John Peters, 39, of Park Avenue, was charged with rape, statutory sexual assault, endangering the welfare of children, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault and corruption of minors.

He was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

The girl told Nanticoke police that she was sexually assaulted at least five times at her mother's apartment in Apollo

Circle. She said the assaults happened when her mother was away from the apartment. Peters, who consented to a voice stress test by Wright Township police, admitted to the allegations before the test was given, Nanticoke police said. Nanticoke police said Peters admitted to having sexually assaulted the girl at least four times, with the latest happening on Dec. 8 at the Apollo Circle apartment. Nanticoke police was assisted by Wright Township police, the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office and Luzerne County Children and Youth Services.

12/14/2006

Cop unhurt when picked by needle

Item in burglary suspect's pocket did not penetrate skin, police say. Suspect denied he had object.

By elewis@timesleader.com

An officer was poked in the finger by a hypodermic needle during the arrest of a burglary suspect Wednesday morning on East Main Street, police said.

Detective Capt. William Shultz and officer Brian Kivler captured Joshua Dwayne Vanderhoff, 20, outside the home shortly after 9 a.m.

Kivler asked Vanderhoff if he had any weapons or needles, and Vanderhoff said "no," Shultz said.

While Kivler was patting down Vanderhoff, Kivler was poked with an uncapped needle that was in Vanderhoff's front pants pocket, Shultz said.

Shultz said the needle penetrated Kivler's glove and picked his middle right finger.

"Luckily, the needle didn't penetrate the skin," Shultz said.

Shultz said Kivler did not require medical treatment.

Because Kivler was poked with a needle, Vanderhoff was charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, recklessly endangering another person and possession of drug paraphernalia. Vanderhoff also was charged with burglary, criminal attempt to commit theft and two counts of criminal trespass.

According to the criminal complaint:

Shultz and Kivler responded to the home when a neighbor saw someone lurking around outside. Wet footprints were found on concrete under a carport.

Vanderhoff was seen inside the home and attempted to flee out the front door when Shultz stopped him.

Vanderhoff said he was "just looking around" and was waiting for a friend, the complaint says.

The homeowner told Shultz that \$10,000 worth of rare coins and \$600 in silver certificates were moved inside the home, the complaint says.

Police said Vanderhoff had a digital camera that was found inside the home.

Vanderhoff's arrest Wednesday happened while he is free on \$1,000 bail stemming from an alleged burglary in Hanover Township in June, according to Luzerne County Court records.

Hanover Township police accused Vanderhoff of burglarizing a home in the Breslau section and stealing jewelry.

Vanderhoff also is accused of stealing a gold ring from Boscov's Department Store in Wilkes-Barre in September.

Those two cases are pending in court.

Vanderhoff was convicted and sentenced to one year of probation in November 2005, for burglarizing a home in Kingston in April 2005, according to court records.

Vanderhoff was arraigned before District Donald Whittaker and was taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

12/7/2006

A home at 210 E. Ridge St. was burglarized between 2 and 4 p.m. Wednesday, police said.

Police said the owners left their home at 2 p.m., and when they returned they noticed someone had entered their home through a side porch door.

The suspects ransacked the residence and stole an undetermined amount of jewelry and cash.

Anyone with information is urged to call police at 735-2200.

12/6/2006

Andrew Hanko Jr., 20, of Center Street in Nanticoke, was sentenced Monday to one to five years in state prison on drug charges.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Mark Ciavarella sentenced Hanko on charges of possession with intent

to deliver a controlled substance and criminal conspiracy.

Ciavarella also sentenced Hanco to one year of probation on a single count of simple assault in another case.

In the drug case, Nanticoke police said Hanco in September 2005 sold crack cocaine to a confidential informant at the East Side Apartments on East Church Street.

12/1/2006

Police said a 16-year-old was arrested on Wednesday and charged as an adult with the armed robbery of a pizza delivery employee.

Zireek Gardner, of East Main Street, Nanticoke, was charged with two counts each of robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, and one count each of recklessly endangering another person and theft.

Gardner was arraigned before District Judge Joseph Carmody and sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

According to the criminal complaint filed by detective captains William Shultz and Kevin Grevera:

Gardner used a friend's telephone to order \$38.30 worth of pizza and wings from Pizza Bella with a request for the food to be delivered to a residence in the 600 block of East Main Street on Nov. 14.

Eric Bieski, an employee for Pizza Bella, arrived in the area and asked Gardner for directions to the home. Gardner told Bieski he didn't know the home.

As Bieski walked away, Gardner shoved him against a wall and aimed a handgun at his chest while demanding money. Gardner fled with money and three pizzas and an order of wings.

12/1/2006

A man who went on a bank robbery spree in the Wyoming Valley in August and September pleaded guilty to federal charges in U.S. District Court on Thursday.

Keith Jeffrey Golomb, of Horizon Village, Wright Township, could face up to 100 years in federal prison and a fine of \$1.2 million when he is sentenced at a later date.

Golomb, 36, pleaded guilty to five counts of bank robbery and incidental crimes before U.S. District Judge William J. Nealon.

According to the indictment filed on Sept. 26:

Golomb was accused of robbing a branch of Wachovia Bank in Plains Township on Aug. 17, attempting to rob a branch of PNC Bank in Wilkes-Barre Township and successfully robbing the Wilkes-Barre Postal Credit Union in Wilkes-Barre on Aug. 18, robbing the Vantage Trust Federal Credit Union in Nanticoke on Aug. 28, and robbing a branch of Citizens Bank in Wilkes-Barre on Sept. 5.

U.S. Assistant Attorney John C. Gurganus prosecuted.

Attorney William Ruzzo represented Golomb.

11/22/2006

Two Hanover Township men were arrested by Nanticoke police on charges they burglarized a garage on East Grand Street on Nov. 16.

Police said Robert Novak III, 19, and Bryan T. Leikheim, 29, both from Oxford Street, were charged with burglary. They were arraigned before District Judge John Hasay in Shickshinny and remained jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$40,000 bail each.

Police said the men burglarized a garage and removed various power tools and lumber. Nanticoke and Hanover Township police searched Novak's home and recovered 18 stolen items from the garage, police said.

11/22/2006

Police are investigating a Saturday burglary at a home on Slope Street.

Police said the suspects entered the double-block home by forcing open a side door at about 2:40 p.m. The homeowner reported cash and jewelry were stolen.

Police said the suspects had been watching the home because the owner was gone for about two hours.

Police said a number of burglaries have occurred in the past month, including homes that are being renovated.

Anyone with information about the burglaries is asked to contact police at 735-2200.

11/21/2006

Drug charges result in state prison time

By Wade Malcolm , Staff Writer

A Lehigh County man was sentenced to five to 10 years in state prison for selling cocaine out of a Nanticoke home near Pope John Paul II elementary school.

Matthew Vasquez, 26, of Allentown, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to deliver and providing false identification to police during a drug bust in January at 21 W. Noble St. Investigators allege in court documents that they found Vasquez with almost 20 grams of cocaine and bundles of cash exceeding \$2,000.

Luzerne County Judge Mark A. Ciavarella Jr. also ordered Vasquez to pay \$105 in restitution to the state police and gave him credit for 303 days served as part of the sentence.

11/16/2006

Cops arrest wanted sex offender

Police investigating robbery find criminal who hadn't reported address living near playground.By

elewis@timesleader.com

A sex offender from Florida who had registered with state police as living in Mechanicsburg was actually illegally living across the street from athletic fields and a playground in the Hanover Section of Nanticoke, police said. Frederick Jaibee Rosario, 31, was arrested Tuesday while police were investigating an armed robbery of a man delivering pizza for Pizza Bella in the 600 Block of Main Street shortly before 10 p.m., said Capt. Detective William Shultz.

Rosario was seen climbing up onto a roof of a home at 141 Loomis St., Shultz said.

Not knowing if Rosario was the suspect in the armed robbery, police detained Rosario until his identification was learned, Shultz said.

A criminal record check showed Rosario was wanted by Collier County, Fla., authorities for failing to register his address as a sex offender, Shultz said.

Rosario's wife, Jennifer Rosario, told Nanticoke police that they had been living at 424 Front St. since July 17, according to the criminal complaint filed by officers Bryan Kata and Brian Kivler.

The Rosarios' residence on Front Street is directly across the street from the Hanover Recreation Club Park that has a playground, Shultz said.

According to records from the Florida Department of Corrections, Rosario was convicted of two counts of lewd sexual battery of a child stemming from an incident on July 1, 1995. He was sentenced July 3, 1997, and served five years of a six-year sentence.

Rosario was released from a Florida prison on May 1, 2001, and listed his address with Florida authorities as Hendry Street, Immokalee, Fla., according to Florida DOC records.

Rosario listed his Pennsylvania address with the state police on June 3, 2003, as 5325 Oxford Drive, Apt. 118, in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, according to the state's Megan's Law Web site and the criminal complaint.

Under Megan's Law in Pennsylvania, registered sex offenders are required to notify the state police within 10 days of any change of residence or establishment of an additional residence.

Nanticoke police charged Rosario with failure to comply with registration of sexual offender's requirements, false identification to law enforcement authorities and being a fugitive from justice. He was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

A preliminary hearing is set for Nov. 21 in Central Court.

Shultz said the investigation in the armed robbery of the man delivering pizza is continuing.

11/7/2006

City police are looking for a man who robbed the First National Community Bank around 1 p.m. on Monday.

A black male in his mid-to-late 20s walked into the bank and wrote "fifties and twenties" and "I'll shoot you" on a deposit slip, which he gave to a teller, according to Nanticoke police Capt. William Shultz.

The teller handed over an undetermined amount of cash and the suspect fled up Market Street toward Main Street.

The man was described as 6 feet tall, about 180 pounds. with a medium build. He was wearing a black ski hat turned inside out, a black hooded jacket zipped up, black pants and black Nike sneakers with white details.

9/22/2006

Three men from Nanticoke face burglary charges in Luzerne County Court for allegedly breaking into a garage and stealing musical equipment.

Micca Heppding, 26, South Hanover Street, and brothers Robert Zaremba, 20, of East State Street, and Matthew Zaremba, 19, of West Main Street, are accused of breaking a window at a garage on Orchard Street, Nanticoke, on July 5 and stealing three guitars, a guitar stand, a microphone and a synthesizer valued at more than \$2,000, Nanticoke police said in arrest papers.

Police said the trio attempted to sell the guitars at a music store.

On Thursday, Senior District Judge Andrew Barilla in Central Court forwarded burglary charges against Heppding and Matthew Zaremba to trial.

Robert Zaremba faces trial on charges of burglary and criminal conspiracy to commit burglary for his alleged role.

9/20/2006

Man charged in armed robbery

Times Leader staff

Police arrested a man who they believe robbed the Variety Store with a gun earlier this month.

Ryan Nash, 27, East Grand Street, Nanticoke, was charged with robbery, theft, receiving stolen property, recklessly endangering another person, firearms not to be carried without a license, possession of instruments of crime and former convict not to own a firearm. He was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and remanded back to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

It is the second time in less than a week Nash has been charged with robbery.

Wilkes-Barre police accused Nash of robbing Regal's Tavern on Blackman Street with a gun on Sept. 2.

According to the latest criminal complaint filed by township Patrolman Levi Gibbon:

Nash entered the Variety Store on East Main Street and told the clerk he wanted to buy a pack of cigarettes. When the clerk turned around, Nash told her, "Empty the drawer and hurry up. I'm sorry but I have kids to feed."

Nash showed the clerk a gun. He fled the store with a small amount of cash.

The store's owner, Beverly Banks, said the surveillance recording system was not working at the time.

Nash is also a person of interest in an armed robbery at a Turkey Hill Minit Market, Plains Township, on Sept. 12.

Nash has criminal convictions in Luzerne County Court for violating a protection from abuse order, criminal trespass and receiving stolen property, according to court records.

A preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 25 at 9 a.m. in Central Court.

9/20/2006

More charges for suspected bank robber

By EDWARD LEWIS elewis@leader.net

A man is facing another set of charges connected to a credit union robbery late last month.

Keith Golomb, 38, allegedly told police that he robbed the Vantage Trust Federal Credit Union, South Market Street, on Aug. 28 and used the money to buy heroin, police said.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Capt. Detective William Shultz:

Golomb was seen outside the credit union urinating against a wall and a vehicle, and acting suspiciously on a front sidewalk.

Golomb entered the credit union and passed a note to a teller that said, "This is no joke and don't alert anyone."

The teller activated a silent alarm as Golomb fled the bank with cash. He ran to the Prospect Street Café where he gave a patron \$30 to give him a ride out of town.

Police found a palm print belonging to Golomb on the credit union's door.

Golomb was charged with two counts of robbery and a single count of theft. He was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and remanded to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

Tuesday's arrest is the fourth for Golomb since Sept. 7.

Golomb has been accused of robbing a Wachovia Bank branch on state Route 315 in Plains Township on Aug. 17, and attempting to rob the PNC Bank branch near Blackman Street in Wilkes-Barre Township on Aug. 18.

Wilkes-Barre police accused Golomb last week of robbing the Citizens Bank branch on Kidder Street on Sept. 5.

Golomb's total bail on all the charges stands at \$645,000, according to court records.
A preliminary hearing on the different charges is tentatively set for 9 a.m. Sept. 25 in Central Court.

8/29/2006

Vantage Trust Federal Credit Union robbed

A suspect described as a white male in his mid-20s robbed the Vantage Trust Federal Credit Union around 11 a.m. Monday, police said.

The man entered the credit union, located at 158 S. Market St., and demanded \$5,000 in \$100, \$50 and \$20 bills. He told the teller he had a gun and kept his hand under his shirt.

When the teller turned over an undetermined amount of cash, he insisted on more.

He fled on foot, heading north on Market Street and cutting through a parking lot leading to Locust Street. Police found a blue-jean shirt he was described as wearing on South Prospect Street.

The suspect is between 5 feet 10 inches tall and 6 feet tall, with a small to medium build. He was unshaven and wearing blue jeans, the blue-jean shirt and a tan-and-blue baseball cap.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

8/17/2006

Burglary at GNA

Police are investigating a burglary at Greater Nanticoke Area High School, 425 Kosciuszko St., on Tuesday night.

Investigators said there were no signs of forced entry but several rooms were ransacked on the second floor and two laptop computers were stolen, one from the first floor and one from the second.

Police think the burglar or burglars took personal items from teachers' desks, such as a tool set, CDs and change. Police think they left the school through the southeast shop doors that lead to the rear parking lot.

School officials are trying to determine what was stolen because school is not in session.

8/14/2006

Police investigating ATV thefts

Police in Nanticoke and Wilkes-Barre Township are investigating the thefts of two all-terrain-vehicles that occurred on Saturday and Sunday.

Rebecca and Jeffrey Josef of West Union Street, Nanticoke reported their 2001 Yamaha was stolen Saturday around 2:56 p.m. by two men who had come to look at the vehicle, which was for sale. One of the men took it for a test drive and drove off without returning. The other male, who was in a truck, also fled the area.

One of the men identified himself as "Adam." He is described as a white male in his early to mid 20's with jet black hair and a couple of tattoos on one of his arms. The other suspect is described as a white male in his early to mid 20's, about 6 feet tall with short black hair. He has tattoos on one arm from top to bottom and earrings in his nose, ear and lip. They were driving a late 1980's to early 1990's truck, possibly a Ford Ranger that is maroon or brown over white.

In the Wilkes-Barre Township case, George Elko reported someone stole his 2005 Yamaha at around 3 p.m. Sunday. Details of how that theft occurred were not immediately available Monday morning. The suspect is described as a white male, about 6 feet, 2 inches tall with short black hair and a "USMC" tattoo on his left forearm.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke Police at 735-2800 or Wilkes-Barre Township Police at 208-4635 ext. 874.

8/4/2006

4 drug suspects charged

Police say they shut down two drug houses Tuesday night resulting in the arrest of four people.

Capt. Detective William Shultz said Peggy Stewart, 50, Kevin Raymond Jones, 52, both from 303 E. Union St., and Declum Sealey, 21, New York City, were arrested after police found 25 grams of crack cocaine inside the residence. Shultz said seven packets of marijuana and \$600 also were found inside the residence.

Stewart, Jones and Sealey are charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, criminal conspiracy and criminal use facility.

Stewart is being held at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$15,000 bail. Sealey is jailed on \$5,000 bail.

Information about Jones' bail was not available Wednesday afternoon.

After the drug raid on East Union Street, Shultz said officers raided the apartment of James Cobley, 24, at 76 W. Broad St. Shultz said police seized 401 grams of marijuana.

Cobley is charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance and delivery of a controlled substance.

Information about Cobley's bail was not available Wednesday afternoon.

7/13/2006

Man sentenced to prison

James Spence, 39, of Nanticoke, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for robbing two banks and violating his supervised release from prison.

U.S. Attorney Thomas A. Marino said Spence admitted to robbing the First National Community Bank in Nanticoke of \$1,290 on April 28, 2004, and robbing the Omega Bank in State College of \$1,600 on April 29, 2004.

In both robberies, Spence gave tellers a note and said he had a gun.

Spence pleaded guilty in March 2006 to two counts of bank robbery.

Spence also committed both robberies while on supervised release from a prior bank robbery conviction.

District Chief Judge Thomas I. Vanaskie sentenced Spence.

7/12/2006

Man sentenced to prison

Jason Zidek, 28, of Shickshinny, was sentenced recently to five to 10 years in state prison for robbing a Nanticoke pharmacy.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joseph Augello sentenced Zidek on charges of robbery, possession of drug paraphernalia, and possession of a controlled substance in three separate cases.

Nanticoke police said Zidek in October 2004 entered Spotanski's Pharmacy on Prospect Street and said he had a gun while demanding OxyContin. The owner said he had none, and Zidek jumped over the counter and began rooting through drawers. He grabbed some painkiller patches and ran for the door, where he engaged in a physical struggle with the store owner.

Zidek fled and was later arrested.

6/6/2006

Man sentenced to prison

Leo Jarmusik, 23, with addresses in Newport and Lehman townships, was sentenced Monday to three to six years in a state prison, followed by three years of probation on numerous charges.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. sentenced Jarmusik on charges of burglary, criminal trespass, theft, criminal conspiracy and receiving stolen property in five criminal cases.

In one case, Nanticoke police said, Jarmusik and another man in August 2005 broke into an East Union Street residence and stole numerous items, including a computer and DVDs, and later sold them.

In another case, Nanticoke police said Jarmusik and another man in January 2006 broke into an Apollo Circle home and stole numerous items.

6/04/2006

Man shot in racial dispute

Robert Zaremba is listed in stable condition after the West Main Street incident.

By j davidson@leader.net

Gunshots rang out on West Main Street early Saturday morning when a racially charged confrontation turned violent, police said.

A Nanticoke man, 20-year-old Robert Zaremba, was shot three times — once in each leg and once in the left side of his chest — at about 12:46 a.m. Saturday after he and a group of friends exchanged racial slurs with a group of black men in the 100 block of West Main Street.

Zaremba was flown to Community Medical Center in Scranton, where he was in stable condition Saturday.

According to police:

Zaremba and three friends, all of whom are white, encountered a group of five black men and a white woman at the Uni-Mart on Main Street.

The groups traded racial epithets and then left the store. As the two groups walked west down West Main Street they continued yelling slurs at each other.

Near Hanover Street Zaremba wound up in the middle of the road with the gunman, who was described as a black man with beaded corn rows, approximately 20 years old, 5 feet 7 inches tall and about 150 pounds.

The man, who was also wearing a black basketball jersey with the number 7 on it, pulled out a handgun and fired five or six shots, three of which hit Zaremba, and then ran away with the others in his group to the area of Apollo Circle.

During a search of the crime scene police discovered the front and back windshield of a resident of West Main Street was shattered by gunfire.

Police called the shooting racially motivated but not gang-related, saying Zaremba and his friends are not members of a gang. Police are unsure if the suspected shooter and his group are affiliated with a gang. Police are also unsure if the groups knew each other.

The owner of the Uni-Mart, where the confrontation began, said police plan to review his security tapes in hopes of identifying the shooter.

5/28/2006

Drug Deal Broken

Patrolmen broke up a drug deal at a West Church Street car wash Thursday night after they recognized a truck used in past drug deals in the area, police said.

That night, John Burton Derhammer Jr. was arrested on charges of possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and drug paraphernalia, corruption of minors and furnishing alcohol to minors.

According to police:

Officers saw two trucks, a Ford and a GMC, parked in car wash stalls. It was raining.

A man, later identified as Robert Gogola, got out of the Ford and quickly started toward the GMC, which police recognized as Derhammer's vehicle. Gogola went to the driver's side door and tried to hand something through the window but quickly pulled his hand away when he saw police approaching. Police asked Gogola what was in his hand and he revealed he was holding \$80 cash.

Gogola then told police he was washing the mud off his truck. When police saw that the Ford had no mud on it and then said they knew who Derhammer was and what he was doing, Gogola told police he wouldn't insult them and said that he was there to buy crack cocaine from Derhammer.

Inside the GMC, police found Derhammer with two teenage girls, Theresa Daniels, 18, and a 17-year-old whose name was not released. Police also found two freshly opened bottles of beer, a crack pipe, pill bottles, hypodermic needles, a digital scale and numerous bags of crack cocaine — as well as loose pieces of crack — all over the truck.

The teenagers, who police thought were under the influence of drugs and alcohol, were taken to the police station, where they said they met Derhammer at the car wash and then went around town with him as he sold crack at several locations before going to a wooded area to smoke crack and then coming back to the car wash to meet Gogola.

Derhammer resisted being interviewed by police and said only that there was no crack in the GMC and that police found nothing on him. He was taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$25,000 straight bail.

5/19/2006

Cop dragged by car

Police Officer Bryan Kata was dragged alongside a car Wednesday after he reached inside the vehicle while trying to arrest a 29-year-old man wanted on an outstanding warrant.

Officers saw David Matthews, also known as "Orb," around 9:40 a.m. near State Street. Police followed Matthew's Lincoln Town Car and activated flashing lights and sirens, but Matthews failed to stop, police said.

According to a police account, officers then pulled a cruiser in front of Matthews's car, and Kata approached the vehicle, reached inside and attempted to turn off the ignition.

Matthews continued driving and dragged Kata, police said. Officers eventually managed to stop Matthews in his car, and after he spent a few moments refusing to unlock the doors, he was taken into custody.

He was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, simple assault, resisting arrest, reckless endangerment, flight to avoid apprehension or punishment, driving with a suspended license and other related charges.

4/14/2006

Man: I'm scapegoat for cops

Josh Hallas says Nanticoke police are using him as an example to show they are doing something in their fight against drugs in the city.

By rsweeney@leader.net

Though he has admitted to lying to police about cocaine stolen from his car, Josh Hallas said he believes he's been unjustly targeted by a police department looking to score a public victory in its fight against drugs.

"Basically that's how it goes," Hallas said Thursday. "You think police officers are there to help you; sometimes they seem to be there to screw you.

"I think they might be using me as a scapegoat because there's pressure on them ... to reduce the amount of drug activity. They're using me as an example to make it look public that they are doing something."

According to police, Hallas reported on Saturday that a \$6,500 brick of cocaine was stolen from his unlocked car.

Hallas maintains the report was "embellished" and his comment was a "sarcastic remark" while he and the reporting officer "were joking about it."

Hallas said he really came in to report items stolen from his unlocked 1987 Mercury Grand Marquis: a portable stereo, an auto inspection sticker and Xanax, a tranquilizer for which police confirmed he has a prescription.

On Wednesday, Hallas admitted to lying about the cocaine during a second interview with police and will be charged with making false reports.

"The police officer who took the (original) report did not blow it out of proportion," police Capt. William Shultz said.

"Evidently, all he was in there to complain about was the cocaine."

Hallas said he's "financially screwed right now" and needs "something in the newspaper stating that I'm a decent person" before he is allowed to return to his carpentry job.

Shultz wasn't ready to make that endorsement. "How am I to say he's a decent person or not a decent person? He's been arrested before. I've personally never had any issues with him, and he did cooperate during this investigation," he said.

Hallas said several times to a reporter that he is not a drug user and has never been arrested before, but Luzerne County records and police reports show otherwise.

Shultz said Hallas has been arrested in Nanticoke twice before, both in 2003, on charges including assault and receiving stolen property. Shultz said Hallas pleaded guilty to the stolen property charge, but he couldn't recall how the assault case was resolved.

He has been charged in at least seven other incidents, most recently on Jan. 16 in Wilkes-Barre in which police said he admitted to being a heroin user after an officer found a spoon with heroin residue and a syringe in his truck. Police charged him with possession of drug paraphernalia.

Shultz said the previous charges could affect Hallas' penalty if he is convicted of the false reports charge, which carries a maximum of one year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

"We're here to do our job. We didn't go looking for him, he came to us," Shultz said. "We're certainly not going to use him as a scapegoat. He's going to say anything he wants to at this point."

4/13/2006

Man to be charged with making false reports to Nanticoke police

Cocaine story leads to charges

By rsweeney@leader.net

Remember the joke where the carpenter walks into a police station and says he lied about a brick of cocaine being stolen from his unlocked car?

You know, the one with the punch line: And then he was charged with making false reports to law enforcement officers.

Josh Hallas' initial report Saturday that \$6,500 worth of cocaine was stolen, plus his alleged remark about it "snowing" in his car, turned out to be a snow job, according to police Capt. William Shultz.

Shultz re-interviewed Hallas on Wednesday to get to the "meat and potatoes" of the matter.

Hallas, 24, changed his statement, saying only auto inspection stickers, a portable stereo and prescription Xanax, a tranquilizer, worth an estimated total of \$400, were stolen from his 1987 Mercury Grand Marquis overnight Friday.

“He gave me a statement that he lied to the police,” Shultz said.

That admission could potentially cost Hallas \$2,500 in fines and up to a year in jail.

Shultz said Hallas was allowed to leave after the interview, but will be charged.

If convicted, Hallas would probably not face jail time, but he could face fines and would “definitely” be on probation, Shultz said.

Hallas couldn't be reached for comment Wednesday.

Hallas said Tuesday that he'd “rather have the charges than have (the stolen cocaine story) out there” because his “a-- is on the line” with his employer, who wouldn't allow him to return to work.

He characterized the situation as an offhand, “sarcastic remark” that police “embellished” in their report.

“I was just being a wisea--. ... We were joking about it,” he said Tuesday.

Shultz didn't get the humor.

“He refers to it as joking around,” Shultz said. “Either you lied or you told the truth.”

The drama has captured the attention of producers at CourtTV, who Shultz said called his office interested in doing a story.

Shultz said he inspected Hallas' car and found no drug residue. He said he was trying to verify that the car had, in fact, been inspected by a garage and that Hallas has a valid prescription for Xanax.

4/12/2006

Police say man's coke story no joke

By rsweeney@leader.net

Ever hear Josh Hallas' joke about the brick of cocaine stolen from his car?

Neither had the city's police department – which is why they weren't laughing when the 24-year-old told them Tuesday that he was being sarcastic when he mentioned a missing \$6,500 brick of cocaine in his theft report on Saturday.

“They embellished that totally; they took it out of proportion,” Hallas said, adding he had consumed “a couple” of beers before making his report. “I was just being a wisea--. ... We were joking about it.”

So can the police take a joke?

“You mean a lie?” asked Capt. William Shultz.

Shultz said if the cocaine had been found, Hallas could have faced drug charges.

Shultz will give Hallas a second chance to report the thefts from his vehicle this morning.

This time, Hallas says he plans to leave out the part about the cocaine. But that might not get him off the hook.

If Hallas changes his story, Shultz said “he will be charged” with making false reports to law enforcement officers.

Hallas disputes what police have already reported.

For starters, police said he lives on West Ridge Street, but he said he resides at a house in Dallas most of the time.

In a police report issued Sunday, Hallas told police that he had driven to Philadelphia and purchased cocaine on Friday.

On Tuesday, Hallas maintained he never went to Philadelphia or bought cocaine, nor did he tell police he went to Philadelphia to buy cocaine. And he said he didn't mention it was “snowing” in the car in reference to the stolen drugs, as reported by police.

What was really stolen from his car, Hallas said Tuesday, were his auto inspection stickers, a stereo from the back seat, and Xanax, a tranquilizer, for which he said he has a prescription.

He said his 1987 Mercury Grand Marquis, which can't be locked, was moved slightly from where he parked it Friday night, which led him to believe someone took the vehicle and later returned it.

Hallas, who works as a carpenter for a local construction company, said the ordeal has left him “burnt out.” He said his employer hasn't allowed him to work since police released the reports.

“I'd rather have (making false reports) charges than have this out there,” he said. “My a-- is on the line.”

Shultz chuckled at the jam Hallas got himself into.

“He's said so many things,” Shultz said, laughing. “One way or another, maybe he's going to be arrested.”

Nanticoke police say Joshua Hallas reported cocaine stolen from car. Hallas denies that.

By RORY SWEENEY

Joshua Hallas is waiting for a retraction from the Nanticoke Police Department, but police say he shouldn't hold his breath.

The best he can hope for is that the department never finds property they say he reported stolen.

Police reported Sunday that Hallas, 24, of West Ridge Street, came to police headquarters Saturday to report that his

1987 Mercury Grand Marquis had been moved overnight and that some items were taken. Pressed for further information, Hallas said it was “snowing” in his car, in reference to an item stolen from the car. Finally, according to the police report, he said a \$6,500 brick of cocaine, which he had purchased during a trip to Philadelphia the previous day, was missing.

The incident was printed in the Times Leader on Monday.

Upon learning of the printed report late that afternoon, Hallas said he went to police headquarters again, but this time to complain about the article.

He says the incident “didn’t happen.”

Told that the Times Leader’s policy is to print retractions on police incident reports only after receiving an official retraction from the police department, Hallas said, “You’ll have one (Tuesday).”

According to Nanticoke police Capt. William Shultz: “It’s not gonna happen.

“The article stands as is. What he says is what he says, and there’s no way we’re going to do a retraction.”

Shultz told Hallas the most he would do was discuss the situation with Chief James Cheshinski.

Shultz said that when Hallas came to the station Monday, Hallas claimed he wanted to report a stolen stereo the first time he came, on Saturday. There was no mention of a stolen stereo in the police report.

Regarding the stolen cocaine brick, Shultz said Hallas wanted that to be confidential.

“He claims he wanted to report a stereo stolen ... and in the process gave up that information about the drugs,” Shultz said.

He said Hallas is well known to the department and has been involved with them before on drug issues, but “nothing that he’s been arrested for.”

He said the confusion might have come because Hallas is often on the record one moment with his statements and then off the record the next.

He said it would be difficult to charge Hallas with drug possession without evidence and said the vehicle had “apparently not” been checked for residues. He didn’t know if it would be checked.

However, Schultz said that if, through an interview, Hallas’ story about the drugs turns out to be untrue, he could be charged with making a false report.

Joshua Hallas’ theft report might land him in trouble.

The 24-year-old, of 49 W. Ridge St., reported on Saturday that overnight someone moved his 1987 Mercury Grand Marquis, which was left unlocked.

After checking the car, he realized something was missing. He told police, in reference to the stolen item, it had been “snowing,” in his car. He then added that a \$6,500 brick of cocaine was missing, which he had purchased during a trip to Philadelphia the previous day, police said.

The investigation continues and possible charges are pending, police said.

2/22/2006

Guilty plea entered in friend’s death Obaza given state prison sentence for killing Novak

BY ROBERT KALINOWSKI STAFF WRITER

A 19-year-old man pleaded guilty Tuesday to running over and killing his best friend with a Jeep last summer in a wooded area of Nanticoke, an act he reportedly once told police was a “mercy killing.”

Luzerne County Judge Mark Ciavarella immediately sentenced Brandon Obaza to serve six to 12 years in state prison after the Nanticoke teen accepted the third-degree murder plea agreement

Investigators charged Obaza in August with intentionally driving over 25-year-old Stephen S. Novak on July 17 in a remote area off West Main Street, leaving Novak pinned underneath the vehicle. Novak died of severe head trauma.

Novak’s dad, Stephen Novak Sr., was unhappy with Obaza’s punishment.

“I thought it was weak,” the 54-year-old father said of the sentence while walking to his car. “There’s people who steal stuff that get more time. But, I’m not a lawyer, just a heartbroken dad.”

If anything good came from Tuesday’s plea, it’s that the families of the former close friends finally got some closure, Novak said.

As Obaza’s parents, David and Susan Obaza, were leaving the courtroom, his mother offered a simple comment to sum up the family’s feelings.

“Relieved,” she said, as the family stepped into an elevator.

After agreeing to accept the plea, Obaza declined an opportunity to address the courtroom prior to sentencing.

Obaza faced a maximum sentence of 20 to 40 years in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of six years,

Ciavarella reminded him.

Ciavarella took about a minute to rule that Obaza should spend six to 12 years in state prison, giving him credit for time served from mid-July when Obaza was admitted to First Hospital Wyoming Valley in Kingston after a suicide attempt following the murder.

Following the court hearing, Obaza's other attorney, Shelly Centini, said her client is more remorseful than worried about his sentence. He could be out of jail by the time he's 25, while his friend's family will never get to see their loved one again, she said.

"It's a life sentence in his own mind. It was his best friend, his only friend," Centini said.

Questions will likely remain in this strange case forever, she said.

Why did Obaza do it?

"I think if you asked him, he doesn't even know," she said.

At Obaza's preliminary hearing in September, a detective testified Obaza called Novak's murder a "mercy killing" and that Novak "didn't want to continue living." Centini said the alleged statement was taken right before her client was admitted for a mental health treatment.

When the murder occurred, police noted that items used in satanic worship were found in the homes of both men. They investigated whether the occult was a motive behind the killing. The issue was not mentioned at Tuesday's court session. Afterward, several prosecutors said there was no need to bring up the issue.

"I don't know why this occurred. Stephen's family doesn't know why this occurred. I don't even think the defendant understands why this occurred," Ciavarella said prior to handing down the sentence. "I can't understand how good friends do what they do."

2/10/2006

Nanticoke police clear LCCC student with gun

The undergrad might still face disciplinary action for violating school policy, an official says.

By kamerman@leader.net

A Luzerne County Community College student who entered a campus building with a gun Wednesday has been cleared by authorities but could be disciplined by the school.

The student, whose name has not been released, has a permit to carry a concealed weapon, said Nanticoke Detective Capt. William Shultz. But he violated a school policy that prohibits firearms in the building.

Concerned students saw the student with the gun and notified security workers, who called police, according to Shultz and the school.

When the student was located he did not have the gun on him, but admitted to unintentionally possessing it on campus earlier in the day.

He was escorted from a campus building without incident by police, according to the college.

"We take these matters very seriously and immediately responded to protect our students and staff," said Thomas P.

Leary, vice president of student development, in a press release. "A decision regarding disciplinary action will be made immediately with the primary concern being the safety of the entire college community."

Shultz said Thursday he did not have the student's name and even if he did, he "couldn't, in good faith," release it.

"The kid did nothing wrong (legally)," Shultz said. "It's just a violation of school policy."

1/27/2006

Nanticoke man admits his guilt in assaulting Nanticoke City police officer

A Nanticoke man who confessed to setting fires to two vehicles owned by the Ashley police chief pleaded guilty Thursday in Luzerne County Court to assaulting a police officer.

Eric Keefe, 24, East Green Street, pleaded guilty before President Judge Michael Conahan to aggravated assault, terroristic threats, loitering, criminal attempt to commit trespass. He also pleaded guilty to unrelated charges of simple assault, criminal trespass and criminal mischief and harassment.

Nanticoke police accused Keefe of burglarizing Spontanski's Pharmacy, South Prospect Street, on Oct. 8.

Keefe was taken to police headquarters, where he assaulted Sgt. Kevin Grevera and Officer Bryan Kata.

Keefe admitted to Nanticoke police that he burned two personal vehicles owned by Ashley Police Chief David Cerski.

Cerski could not be reached for comment Thursday.

2005

10/14/2005

Newport teen to stand trial in home invasion

By:Robert Kalinowski

A 19-year-old man police say tried to rob a Nanticoke couple at gunpoint in August will stand trial in Luzerne County Court.

The couple, Jennifer Souder and Josh Kirkpatrick, testified Wednesday that David Maslar put a gun to Kirkpatrick's head and demanded money the evening of Aug. 19 at their East Green Street home.

After a 20-minute preliminary hearing, District Judge Donald Whittaker, Nanticoke, ruled to send robbery and related charges against the Newport Township man to county court.

Whittaker remanded Maslar to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in \$50,000 cash bail.

In her testimony, Souder said she let a man, later identified as Maslar, into the home because he asked for her boyfriend by name and assumed he was Kirkpatrick's friend.

She said Kirkpatrick recognized the man as Maslar, before Maslar put a handkerchief over his face and pulled out a gun. Souder said she tried to call 911 when the man pulled the gun, but the man slapped the phone out of her hand. She then went to check on her 8-month-old baby and fled to call 911 from her mother's apartment.

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

10/11/2005

Suspect: I blew up' chief's car

By Edward Lewis Staff Writer

A Nanticoke man who was arrested on burglary charges Saturday night confessed to setting two arson fires that destroyed vehicles owned by Ashley Borough's police chief, police said.

Eric Keefe, 24, East Green Street, Nanticoke, was apprehended on suspicion of burglarizing Spontanski's Pharmacy, South Prospect Street.

He was taken to police headquarters, where he assaulted Sgt. Kevin Grevera and Officer Bryan Kata, Capt. Bill Shultz said.

"Kevin has a large contusion on his head and was hit in the face by the defendant's saliva," Shultz said. "He was treated at Wilkes-Barre General and is doing OK."

During the struggle, Keefe told police, "I have hepatitis (expletive)," and spat in Grevera's face, according to the criminal complaint.

After assaulting Grevera and Kate, Keefe continued to threaten the officers.

He also admitted to burning two personal vehicles owned by Ashley Police Chief Dave Cerski, police said.

"... I blew up Cerski's cars. I'm gonna burn your (expletive) houses down," Keefe told police, according to the criminal complaint.

Cerski said he spoke with Shultz about Keefe's alleged admission and plans to contact the Luzerne County district attorney's office.

Cerski arrested Keefe on assault charges in May 2002, for loitering near an Ashley police officer's home in October 2000, and most recently, for assaulting a man over a drug debt in August, according to court records.

Keefe was arraigned by District Judge Paul J. Roberts Jr., Kingston. He was charged with recklessly endangering another person, terroristic threats, assault by prisoner, criminal attempt to commit burglary and related charges. He is being held at the county correctional facility in lieu of \$15,000 bail.

Shultz said broken glass found on the bottom of Keefe's sneaker and a shoe print found on a door placed Keefe at the pharmacy.

Shultz said police were preparing to stake out the pharmacy because of an incident involving Keefe earlier in the day.

"Our initial contact with the defendant occurred Oct. 6 when his brother (Michael Keefe) called to report an overdose," Shultz said. "We found him attempting to flush a large quantity of prescription pills down a toilet."

Shultz said Keefe called the police department Saturday and demanded the return of the prescription pills. When police refused to return the pills, Keefe threatened to harm the officers.

"Hours later, we found tires flattened on two police cruisers and another tire on a municipal pickup truck," Shultz said.

Shultz said the vehicles were parked behind the municipal building and the mischief occurred during the day. "For someone like that with a violent behavior, we knew something was up," Shultz said. "We knew he lived near Spontanski's drug store, and we were getting ready to stake it out when we noticed the smashed window" Keefe was allegedly heard behind the store attempting to kick in the door. He ran when police spotted him and was apprehended after a brief pursuit.

9/29/2005

Majority of charges in Newport Twp. robbery withdrawn

By Edward Lewis , Staff Writer

Prosecutors withdrew most of the criminal charges against three Nanticoke men and dropped the case against a fourth for their alleged roles in separate residential robberies in Newport Township last month. Zachary Hallas, 22, Richard Simon, 20, and Jason Demski, 22, will face trial in Luzerne County Court on a single count of criminal conspiracy to commit simple assault. Felony charges of robbery and burglary and misdemeanor charges of theft and criminal trespass were withdrawn against the three men at a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke on Wednesday. Prosecutors opted not to pursue robbery and related charges against Daniel Banks, 19, for his alleged role in a home invasion on Robert Street on Aug. 29. Carol Crane, spokeswoman for the Luzerne County district attorney's office, said the investigation was reviewed and a determination was made to dismiss certain charges against Hallas, Simon and Demski, and to dismiss the case against Banks. "When the assistant district attorney reviewed the charges, he determined appropriately that there was no evidence to support those charges," Crane said. "For instance, they were charged with burglary, but when we listened to the 911 tape, it showed they knocked on the door and didn't force their way inside. The evidence didn't support the charges." Newport Township police said Hallas, Simon and Banks entered the home on Robert Street and demanded money from two people. After the victims said they didn't have any money, the three men fled with six DVDs and a pack of cigarettes. Demski was allegedly involved with Hallas and Simon in a home invasion on East Main Street the same night. Police said no items were stolen from the East Main Street home. Hallas was released from the county correctional facility on his own recognizance after his bail was changed while Simon was released after posting \$30,000 bail. Demski remained incarcerated at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility Wednesday in lieu of \$10,000 bail.

9/24/2005

Teen jailed for threats, beating up boy, say cops

Corey A. Davis of Nanticoke faces burglary and assault charges in incident with boy, his mom.

By bmalina@leader.net

A Nanticoke teen was charged with burglary and assault after beating up a juvenile and threatening to "slice" the boy's mother at their East Green Street home, police said. Corey A. Davis, 18, of Coal Street, punched the juvenile in the face, stomach and ribs at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, police said. About 15 minutes later the boy told his mother, Trish Cartwright, that Davis and two other people were outside the home making threats, police said. According to police: Cartwright confronted Davis, who told her he was going to hurt her son. Davis then entered the Cartwright's yard, grabbed Cartwright by the hair and slammed a fence gate into her, causing her to fall to the ground. Davis then entered their home. Cartwright followed Davis inside and told him she was going to call police. Davis grabbed the phone out of her hand and told her "he was going to slice her up when he comes back." Cartwright then pushed him out of the house. Davis then left the scene, making threats to kill her family, she said. Davis is charged with burglary, criminal trespass, simple assault and harassment. He also faces charges of criminal trespass in connection with a Sept. 16 incident on the Greater Nanticoke Area school property between the high school and the elementary school on Kosciuszko Street.

Detective William Shultz said Davis had been warned in writing in the past not to enter school grounds. He is not a student.

He was arraigned before District Justice Donald Whittaker and is held at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$25,000 bail.

9/20/2005

Arnold admits guilt in murder

By Edward Lewis , Staff Writer

Fighting back tears, Jacqueline Havard said the tragic loss of her son, Nicholas, destroyed relationships and families. "Nick was the youngest of two boys," Jacqueline Havard said Monday in Luzerne County Court. "I'll never again enjoy his company. I'll never see him grow old. He was well liked by his co-workers.

"He is lost because of a stupid, tragic mistake someone else made," she said. "The actions of one person destroyed families. Nothing he can say or do will bring Nick back to us."

Nicholas Havard, 18, was killed when Mark Arnold, 38, shot him in the face outside a bar on Old Newport Street, Newport Township, on May 4, 2004.

Arnold pleaded guilty to third-degree murder and firearms not to be carried without a license before Judge Hugh Mundy. He was sentenced to eight to 16 years in a state correctional institution.

"What Mr. Arnold did was totally unacceptable," said Daniel Waramonski, whose daughter, Brooke, was engaged to Nicholas.

Waramonski said Nicholas was working for his construction company and knew what kind of donuts and soda he liked. "It was such a foolish act; I still can't believe it," Waramonski said. "I still can't believe Nick is gone. May he rest in peace."

Arnold expressed his sorrow to the Havard and Waramonski families through his lawyers, Frank Nocito and Joseph Nocito.

"This was a real human tragedy and a case with human emotions," said District Attorney David W. Lupas. "What happened in this case shows how people's lives can change in an instant."

"There are no winners in this case," said Assistant District Attorney Greg Fellerman, who along with Assistant District Attorney Matt Golden, prosecuted Arnold. "Mr. Arnold used real bad judgment."

Arnold's lawyer, Frank Nocito, said, "It was a fair and just resolution to the case."

Arnold learned that a group of kids were looking for his son, Charles Arnold, who was being blamed for allegedly assaulting Luke Capie.

Arnold and several members of his family drove around the Nanticoke and Newport Township areas looking for the kids when they saw three cars drive slowly past their home on Center Street, Newport Township.

Arnold followed the cars that stopped on Old Newport Street where he confronted the group. He pulled a .22 caliber handgun from his pants and shot Havard, according to the criminal complaint.

Arnold said he only intended to scare the group of kids.

Fellerman said Havard did not threaten Arnold before the deadly shooting.

9/16/2005

Home invasion victim now charged with similar crime

Police say Leo Jarmusik, of Glen Lyon, sold items he stole to two men from Nanticoke.By kamerman@leader.net

A few weeks ago, Leo Jarmusik was listed by police as a victim of a home invasion.

Now, Jarmusik is charged with two burglaries himself, including one which resulted in his home being invaded as retaliation.

Jarmusik, 23, and Benjamin Bonczewski, 22, both of Glen Lyon, have been charged with stealing 15 fishing rods and three tackle boxes, valued at about \$1,000, from a boat in the garage of George and Helyn Hallas of Nanticoke.

They are also charged with burglarizing a Union Street home, stealing DVDs, CDs, toothbrushes, a sex toy, cash, a computer, a video game system and a mini motorized bike.

Jarmusik admitted to the crimes, which both occurred last month, and said he sold many of the items to two Nanticoke men, according to Nanticoke police. Police contacted the men and they identified Jarmusik as the one who sold them the items, police said.

Jarmusik and Bonczewski have been charged with criminal trespass, burglary, criminal conspiracy and theft.

Ironically, police arrested Jarmusik on Sept. 8 while investigating claims of a home invasion made by his girlfriend. Police searched the home and found Jarmusik hiding in a closet in the bathroom. He was apparently hiding because there was a warrant out for his arrest.

Also arrested were the people who allegedly tried to break into the home on Aug. 29: Richard Simon, 20, Zachary Hallas, 22, Jason Demski, 22 and a minor.

Simon and Hallas have been charged with burglary, criminal trespass, criminal conspiracy and loitering and prowling at night.

Demski has been charged with burglary, criminal trespass, criminal conspiracy and loitering and prowling at nighttime. Simon told police that he and Hallas wanted to break in to get back at Jarmusik for allegedly burglarizing their families' homes. Simon believes Jarmusik has burglarized his grandparents, police say. Simon said he planned on beating up Jarmusik, and taking him and the stolen items to police, according to a police report.

Simon Hallas, and Daniel Banks, listed as homeless, were also charged with a violent burglary that took place hours before they allegedly broke into Jarmusik's home, but those charges have been dropped.

The men were charged with kicking down the front door of a Newport Township home at about 8:45 p.m. on Aug. 29, wearing black ski masks and holding knives. A victim told police Hallas placed a knife in his face and told him to give him money. After the victim said he had no money, Hallas punched him in the face and kicked him in the chest, the victim said.

The other victim originally told police that Banks punched him and his ski mask fell off before the men left with about six DVDs and a pack of cigarettes.

But now, the victim says it wasn't Banks, according to Newport Township police officer Levi Gibbon Jr. Police took away the charges because of the claim by the victim that he misidentified Banks. Gibbon said he could interview the suspects again and file new charges.

Gibbon said it's possible that the victims are claiming that they misidentified Banks because they're afraid of retaliation.

9/8/2005

Nanticoke man gets trial in friend's killing

Police: Brandon Obaza ran over Stephen Novak because Novak said he wanted to die.

By kamerman@leader.net

A young Nanticoke man who allegedly ran over his friend with a SUV and called it a "mercy killing" will be tried in Luzerne County court on a homicide charge.

District Judge Donald Whittaker decided at a preliminary hearing Wednesday that there is enough evidence against 19-year-old Brandon Obaza to warrant a trial.

Obaza, who has a thick black beard and shoulder-length hair, told authorities that he ran over Stephen Novak, 24, of Nanticoke, on old mine lands on July 16 after a night of drinking because Novak had asked him for years to kill him, according to the testimony of Luzerne County Detective Lt. Gary Capitano.

Luzerne County Deputy Coroner William Lisman said Novak died of "multiple trauma with crushing head injuries." Obaza's attorney, Public Defender Bill Ruzzo, unsuccessfully petitioned Whittaker to dismiss Obaza's lone charge of homicide.

"It's plainly obvious that everyone here was intoxicated," said Ruzzo, who, with Public Defender Shelley Centini, is defending the case. "One cannot form the specific intent to kill if one is intoxicated."

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Jeff Tokach said Ruzzo's argument wasn't relevant for a preliminary hearing. "I don't think that's a viable defense, but that's for a later date. I don't know how intoxicated he was. It's not relevant. That's a defense they may want to present at trial, but it's not a defense for today."

Obaza and Novak were drinking beer in the wooded area behind a Turkey Hill on the 400 block of West Main Street in Nanticoke with three other people who left before Novak was run over by the Jeep Cherokee owned by Obaza's father, police said.

Obaza told authorities that Novak "didn't want to go on living and didn't care if he died," Capitano said.

Obaza said "he could never see himself doing it," but the beer he drank loosened him up, recounted Capitano.

Police obtained search warrants for the homes of Novak and Obaza, both of which are located on East Ridge Street in Nanticoke. Police found several items relating to the occult and satanic worship, according to court documents. Police said several guns were also found in the Jeep and Obaza's house.

Obaza also told police that when he and Novak got drunk together, they did "unexplainable, impulsive and crazy things," Capitano said.

After running over his friend, Obaza said he took a walk – which he told police seemed to last for days – then went home and loaded a handgun, Capitano said.

At about 2 a.m. on July 17, police interviewed Obaza's father, David Obaza, telling him his son was a person of interest and giving him 15 minutes to remove all the guns from his home.

When David Obaza failed to call police back in 15 minutes, police called his home and spoke with Obaza's mother, Susan.

Police said they heard a struggle in the background between Obaza and his father, and returned to the home to learn that Obaza had tried to shoot himself in the head before his father subdued him.

Obaza was taken into police custody and received a mental evaluation to see if his suicide attempt was "genuine," said Capitano.

During the evaluation, Obaza admitted to the killing, police say.

9/8/2005

Mother of murder victim, suspect embrace after hearing

By Robert Kalinowski , Staff Writer

Barbara Thomas Yackimowski watched prosecutors piece together the pieces of her son's killing.

She heard testimony of an alleged confession from the Nanticoke man charged in the case.

Her son Stephen Novak's long-time best friend, Brandon Obaza, told police he intentionally ran over Novak with a Jeep on July 16 in a remote area of West Main Street, Nanticoke, prosecutors said.

Novak, 25, had a death wish and the crime was a "mercy killing," according to a statement Obaza allegedly gave to authorities.

Less than two minutes after District Judge Donald Whittaker ruled to forward a criminal homicide charge against Obaza to trial, Yackimowski and Obaza's mother, Susan, met face-to-face Wednesday in the Nanticoke courtroom.

They hugged. Then cried.

For about 45 seconds, these two grieving mothers sustained the emotional embrace as police led Obaza from the hearing.

None of the approximately 20 family members and friends of Obaza and Novak in attendance wished to comment on the case of a close friendship gone woefully awry.

Obaza, 19, was remanded without bail to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility to await trial.

Chief witness for the prosecution at Wednesday's preliminary hearing, Det. Lt. Gary Capitano, of the Luzerne County district attorney's office, focused on Obaza's alleged confession.

"Brandon Obaza indicated that for years Stephen Novak had requested him to do this -that he (Novak) didn't want to continue living," Capitano said. "As far as Brandon Obaza was concerned, he considered it a 'mercy killing.' "

Capitano also discussed other findings he says implicated Obaza and warranted an arrest.

Luzerne County Coroner Dr. George Hudock ruled Novak's death was homicide from multiple traumatic injuries, to which Chief Deputy Coroner William Lisman testified Wednesday.

Three witnesses, who said they consumed beers with Novak and Obaza prior to the incident, said they left the two friends alone in the wooded area.

Novak, 222 E. Ridge St., Nanticoke, was found pinned under the 1990 Jeep Cherokee, owned by Obaza's father, David, and primarily driven by Obaza.

Keys later seized from Obaza were successfully used to start the impounded Jeep's ignition.

Obaza was arrested and charged with Novak's death on Aug. 4 after spending more than two weeks in the psychiatric ward of First Hospital, Kingston, following a suicide attempt, police said.

Though in the early part of the investigation police highlighted the possibility of the killing having satanic and occult overtones - as items used in satanic worship were found in the homes of Obaza and Novak - the issue wasn't addressed at the hearing.

Obaza's public defender, William Ruzzo, unsuccessfully argued to dismiss the option of first-degree murder because Lisman didn't submit Novak's death certificate as evidence and both men were likely intoxicated and one can't form a specific intent to kill in such a state.

Following Whittaker's ruling that an open count of criminal homicide will move to trial, Ruzzo declined comment, saying it's too early in this stage of the case.

9/1/2005

Arrests made in two home invasions

Charged were Zachary Hallas, Richard Simon and Jason Demski, all of Nanticoke.

By kamerman@leader.net

Three men were arrested Tuesday in connection with two separate home invasions, police said.

During one incident, three men wearing black ski masks brandished knives and assaulted two men while demanding money.

Arrested were the following Nanticoke men: Zachary Hallas, 22; Richard Simon, 20; and Jason Demski, 22.

According to police:

Simon, Hallas and Daniel Banks kicked in the front door of a Newport Township home wearing black ski masks and holding knives on Monday at about 8:45 p.m. and demanded money from two men inside.

One of the victims said he has known the men who broke into the house for years. A victim told police Hallas placed a knife in his face and told him to give him money. After the victim said he had no money, Hallas punched him in the face and kicked him in the chest, the victim said .

Banks, who has not been apprehended, then punched the other victim on his head, causing a laceration. In the process, the ski mask Banks was wearing fell off. After finding no money, Simon, Hallas and Banks took about six DVDs and a pack of cigarettes. Hallas then kicked a stereo into the wall.

Less than two hours later, at 10:10 p.m., a woman called 911 to report that a group of men had broken into her East Main Street apartment. She said she locked herself in her bedroom with her 8-year-old child. Police saw four people – later identified as Simon, Hallas, Demski and a minor – run from the apartment and enter a silver car. An officer instructed the driver to stop, but the driver continued backing up. After the officer pulled out his gun, the driver stopped and the men got out of the car.

Simon and Hallas have been charged with burglary, criminal trespass, criminal conspiracy and loitering and prowling at night.

Demski has been charged with burglary, criminal trespass, criminal conspiracy and loitering and prowling at nighttime. All three are in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of bail.

8/26/2005

Nanticoke Man Sentenced

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Monday to 31 to 75 months in a state prison for firing 10 shots at a man in Newport Township last year.

Christopher Banks, 23, of East State Street, pleaded guilty in June to aggravated assault and a firearms charge in connection with the Nov. 25 shooting at the home of William Conway on Railroad Street.

Police said Banks and Conway began arguing over the phone.

Banks went to Conway's home and fired the shots at him as he sat on his porch. Conway was not hit, but the bullets damaged the home and a car.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Senior Judge Gifford Cappellini handed down the sentence.

In a separate case, Banks pleaded guilty Monday to one count of attempted robbery of a Nanticoke man and woman.

Police said Banks and a juvenile confronted Michael Dickshinski and his fiancée, Patricia Shilanskis, while they were in a car parked at a doughnut shop on South Market Street.

Police said the juvenile demanded \$150.

When the couple said they didn't have any money, Banks walked to the passenger side door and kicked Dickshinski in the face.

Cappellini sentenced Banks to 31 to 57 months in prison on that charge, but ordered the sentence be served simultaneously with the sentence in the aggravated-assault case.

8/24/2005

Newport Township man charged in Nanticoke robbery

David Maslar of Alden faces several charges in incident. Juvenile also is in custody.

By kamerman@leader.net

A 19-year-old man who allegedly held a gun to a city man's head inside his apartment and demanded money has been captured by police.

Police arrested David Maslar of Alden, Newport Township, on Monday, three days after officers say he walked into an apartment on East Green Street, pulled a red handkerchief over his face and put a gun to the head of Joshua Kirkpatrick, who he said owed him money.

Maslar was charged with robbery, criminal attempt to commit robbery, criminal trespass, carrying a firearm without a license, simple assault, recklessly endangering another person, terroristic threats and two counts of criminal conspiracy. A 17-year-old juvenile who police say accompanied Maslar to the apartment was taken into custody on Saturday and was placed at PA Child Care in Pittston Township.

According to police:

Maslar and the juvenile approached Kirkpatrick's girlfriend, Jennifer Souder, in front of the apartment at about 8 p.m. on Friday as she returned home from grocery shopping. The men wanted to know where Kirkpatrick lived, so she led them to their apartment, which they share with their baby.

After entering, Maslar placed the handkerchief over his face, although Kirkpatrick had already seen him, and pulled out the gun and demanded money. After checking on her baby, Souder entered the kitchen, saw Kirkpatrick holding a gun to her boyfriend's head and instructed Maslar to leave. She reached for a phone, but Maslar took it from her and threw it on the floor. She left the room and entered a hallway where she was pushed to the wall by the juvenile, but was able to escape. She went downstairs to her mother's apartment and called police and Maslar and the juvenile fled the apartment in a car. The juvenile was arrested at his home the next day and police took Maslar into custody without incident at his mother's house in Alden on Monday.

Maslar was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker and was remanded to Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Aug. 31.

8/23/2005

Robber holds gun to head of man

By Elizabeth Skrapits , Staff Writer

Friday, Aug. 19 was a night Jennifer Souder will never forget.

She'd planned a quiet domestic evening - some shopping, a little cleaning - but ended up in a drama that included a gun held to her boyfriend's head during an attempted robbery.

To make matters worse, the two young men who invaded their Nanticoke home were friends: David Maslar, 19, of East Kirmar Avenue, and a 17-year-old boy.

Maslar, who was arrested Monday, faces charges of robbery, criminal attempt, criminal trespass, carrying a firearm without a license, simple assault, reckless endangerment, terroristic threats, and two counts of criminal conspiracy.

Souder sat at the table in the tiny kitchen of her East Green Street apartment with nine-month-old Brandon in her lap.

The prospect of harm to her boyfriend Joshua Kirkpatrick and their baby was what drove her to chase after the would-be robbers.

"I've got to protect my territory," she said, holding out a hand for Brandon to grasp with tiny fingers.

That Friday, Souder said she had just arrived at her apartment after a trip to the grocery store when two males got out of a dark vehicle that had two females in the front seat.

They asked where her boyfriend was, she said. Souder, who didn't recognize Maslar at first, told them he lived with her and let them in. Kirkpatrick opened the door. Souder told him he had company, then went to check on Brandon, who she said was asleep in another room.

According to Nanticoke police, Kirkpatrick recognized the juvenile and Maslar, who pulled a red handkerchief from around his neck and placed it over his nose and mouth. Maslar then reached into the front of his pants and pulled out what Kirkpatrick told police was a silver or gray semi-automatic handgun.

Maslar allegedly pointed the gun at Kirkpatrick and repeatedly demanded money, but Kirkpatrick told him there wasn't any, police said.

At that point Souder came into the kitchen, saw Maslar holding the gun to her boyfriend's head, and screamed for the intruder to get out of her home.

Kirkpatrick told Maslar "nobody is going to shoot anybody here, my girlfriend and baby are here," while Souder started to reach for the phone on the counter next to her, police said.

Maslar pointed the gun away from Kirkpatrick's head, then took the phone from Souder and threw it on the floor, police said.

Souder left the apartment. When she tried to get past the juvenile in the hallway, he pushed her into the wall, but she didn't let that stop her. She went straight to her mother Sandy Krasowski's apartment downstairs and told her there was a

man with a gun upstairs.

While the women were standing on the sidewalk outside, Maslar and the juvenile came out of the building and ran north on Walnut Street towards the alley.

Maslar and the juvenile got into the vehicle with the two blonde females and sped off towards South Prospect Street.

Souder called Nanticoke police at about 8:05 p.m.; they arrived within three minutes.

The juvenile was taken into custody at 1 a.m. Saturday, but police did not say how, or whether he will be charged.

Maslar was arraigned before Magisterial District Justice Donald Whittaker, then lodged in Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$50,000 cash bail. His preliminary hearing is set for 10 a.m., Aug. 31 in front of Whittaker.

Investigators in the case were Nanticoke Det. Capt. William Shultz, Sgt. Kevin Grevera, and Officers Brian Williams, Joseph Kosch, and Lee Makowski, along with the office of Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas.

8/16/2005

Alleged beer-demanding thief faces variety of charges

By Elizabeth Skrapits , Staff Writer

Nanticoke police have filed new charges against a man they say tries to enter homes under false pretenses, in order to steal money and drink beer.

Charges of criminal trespass and theft by deception were filed Monday with Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker against Timothy Allen Prizniak, 34, of Jones Street, Nanticoke, Sgt. Kevin Grevera said.

On Sunday, Prizniak went to two separate Nanticoke residences at 8 and 8:40 p.m., police said. At the first home, he asked a woman for money, telling her his car had broken down in Hazleton. She refused and closed the door on him. Prizniak knocked on the door of the second residence and asked to use the bathroom. He walked in without being told to enter and said he wanted to borrow money to get his vehicle out of impound. The man refused, told Prizniak to leave, and called police.

Prizniak, who is on bail from previous charges including criminal trespass, theft, stalking, harassment, and loitering and prowling at nighttime, has not yet been arraigned on the latest ones, Grevera said.

According to police:

On April 4 at 10:04 p.m., Prizniak went to a Nanticoke man's home, falsely claiming he was responding to a job ad in a newspaper. He entered the home without permission, overpowered the man, and stole \$25 from a dresser drawer.

During an April 8 interview with police, Prizniak admitted to the act, saying he needed money for drugs, Grevera said. Prizniak was charged with burglary and theft.

On April 19 at 1:07 a.m., Prizniak knocked loudly on the door of a Nanticoke woman and entered, brandishing a metal object the woman was too frightened to identify, and demanded a beer.

He went into her kitchen, opened the refrigerator, took out a can of beer and drank it. The woman's boyfriend then awoke and scared Prizniak off. He was charged with criminal trespass.

On April 30 at 11:54 p.m., Prizniak knocked on the door of a man's residence and again demanded a beer. The homeowner said no. Prizniak pushed at the door while the man held it trying to keep him out, saying what the man described to police as "nasty things."

The man told police it was the third time Prizniak tried to enter his residence in April. Prizniak was charged with harassment and stalking.

An obviously intoxicated Prizniak was observed May 1 walking in the area of Jones and Pine streets by Nanticoke police Officer Lee Makowski, who arrested him for public drunkenness.

On May 5 at 12:29 a.m., Prizniak went to the home of a Nanticoke woman and asked to use the phone. She told him no. He persisted, but left when she closed the door.

During August, Nanticoke police received several other complaints about Prizniak going to homes and making phone calls to city and Newport Township residents.

He also has been asking residents to use their bathrooms, or telling them his vehicle was impounded and he needs money to get it out, but police said he does not own a vehicle.

Police are asking Nanticoke residents to be cautious when answering the door, advising them to avoid letting unknown people in because they could be potential thieves.

"They rely on kindness, especially of the elderly," Grevera said. "They might ask to use the phone or the bathroom or for a glass of water, and that's how many people become victims."

8/5/2005

Nanticoke homicide arrest

Police: Friend says killing act of mercy

Brandon Obaza is charged in slaying of Stephen Novak, 24. Link to occult being probed.

By dweiss@leader.net

Police said Brandon Obaza admitted he used a Jeep to run down and kill his close friend in a wooded area last month. He called it a “mercy killing,” police said.

But they still haven’t said whether the slaying of 24-year-old Stephen Novak is definitely connected to the occult or satanic worship, as has been investigated.

“That is one avenue we are looking at at this point in time,” Luzerne County Detective Lt. Gary Capitano said after the 19-year-old Obaza was arraigned on a single count of criminal homicide Thursday afternoon before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

Whittaker sent Obaza to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility to be held without bail pending a preliminary hearing set for Aug. 10.

Capitano, city police Detective Capt. William Shultz and Sgt. Kevin Grevera have been exploring a possible satanic connection in the case since Novak was found pinned underneath a Jeep owned by the Obaza family at about 7:30 p.m. July 16 in a wooded area off West Main Street.

Novak was found several hundred yards from an area where police previously investigated a pile of about 25 to 30 burned and mutilated animal remains found in a “circular-type altar.” Grevera in April 2004 said he could not speculate if the animal slayings were related to any type of satanic rituals.

Police, in prior court papers filed in the homicide, have said their investigation in the case uncovered numerous items in the Obaza and Novak homes, both of which are located on East Ridge Street in Nanticoke, related to the occult and satanic worship.

Thursday’s arrest papers did not reveal much additional information, only Obaza’s cryptic description of the death being a “mercy killing” and that it occurred after Obaza and Novak drank Coors Light in the woods with friends.

Police said Obaza made the “mercy killing” comment the day after Novak was found.

The criminal homicide charge means prosecutors could try to convict Obaza on either first-, second-, or third-degree murder, or manslaughter.

The Obaza family had no comment.

According to Thursday’s arrest affidavit and prior court papers:

Police interviewed John McClellan, who told police he and his boss, Modesto Padilla, took some waste materials from a construction job to the wooded area to burn July 16.

Shortly after they arrived, another man, Frank Markiewicz, arrived before Novak and Obaza arrived.

All five of them drank beer before Padilla, McClellan, and Markiewicz left, leaving Obaza and Novak alone at the fire site, which was “immediately adjacent” to the homicide scene. |

After the body was discovered, police, knowing the Jeep belonged to the Obaza family, spoke to Obaza’s father, David, at about 2 a.m. July 17 at headquarters. Brandon Obaza had not been home since early July 16 and police were trying to find him.

Police knew he had numerous weapons at his home and asked David Obaza to secure the weapons when he went home. They also wanted him to call police when he secured the guns or if he saw his son.

When Obaza failed to call police within 15 minutes of leaving the station, Shultz called the Obaza residence and overheard David and Brandon Obaza arguing over a gun.

Shultz dispatched officers to the home.

David Obaza told police he went home and saw Brandon on a bed with a .45-caliber pistol in his hand.

Brandon immediately stood up and put the gun to his head. David tried getting the gun from Brandon, but Brandon resisted.

The two had a confrontation for several minutes, with Brandon repeatedly putting the gun to his head, one time pulling the trigger.

David heard the “firing mechanism” click, but the gun did not fire. David then subdued his son. Brandon was taken into custody but not charged at the time.

8/5/2005

Nanticoke teenager charged with killing his friend

By Edward Lewis , Staff Writer

A Nanticoke man allegedly told authorities that he intentionally killed his close friend, 24-year old Stephen Novak, describing the act as a "mercy killing," according to the criminal complaint.

Brandon Obaza, 19, of 408 E. Ridge St., was arrested Thursday by Luzerne County Det. Lt. Gary Capitano and Nanticoke police Det. Capt. William Shultz and Sgt. Kevin Grevera for Novak's murder.

Novak, 222 E. Ridge St., Nanticoke, was found dead under a 1990 Jeep Cherokee in a remote area off West Main Street, Nanticoke, on July 16. He would have turned 25 years old on Aug. 8.

Authorities named Obaza as a person of interest in the case; however, he allegedly admitted just hours after Novak's body was found that he intentionally killed his friend.

"Obaza stated that he intentionally ran over Stephen Novak with his vehicle," according to the criminal complaint.

"Obaza referred to this act as a mercy killing."

Obaza was taken in to custody upon his release from Mercy Hospital, Wilkes-Barre, where he was involuntarily committed July 17 when he attempted to kill himself inside his home.

He appeared before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and was charged with an open count of criminal homicide.

An open count of criminal homicide allows prosecutors to seek first- or third-degree murder against Obaza. He was sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail.

Det. Capitano said items of satanic worship recovered from Obaza's and Novak's homes are part of the investigation that is continuing.

According to the complaint, Obaza and Novak joined John McClellan, Modesto Pedilla and Frank Markiewicz at the remote area, where the group was drinking a 30-pack of beer in front of a fire. When all the beer was consumed, McClellan, Pedilla and Markiewicz left while Obaza and Novak stayed behind.

Sometime after the three left, Obaza allegedly ran over Novak with his Jeep. Novak sustained severe head trauma that caused his death, according to the autopsy conducted by county Coroner Dr. George Hudock Jr.

Authorities said McClellan and Pedilla purchased the beer at 5:20 p.m. on July 16. Novak's body was found at about 7:21 p.m., according to the criminal complaint.

Obaza left the area leaving behind the Jeep that remained on top of Novak.

Authorities traced the Jeep to Obaza's father, David J. Obaza.

David J. Obaza allegedly told authorities that his son mainly drove the Jeep. After an interview at the Nanticoke Police Department in the early morning hours on July 17, David Obaza encountered his son holding a Glock .45 caliber handgun to his head.

Obaza pulled the trigger, but the gun failed to discharge a round.

David Obaza struggled with his son. That struggle was allegedly heard by Capt. Shultz over the telephone.

Authorities responded to the Obaza home and secured numerous firearms and seized items of satanic worship that Susan Obaza had found in her son's bedroom and had thrown out.

Authorities said keys that were seized from Brandon Obaza's pocket matched the ignition to the Jeep.

A preliminary hearing is tentatively set for Aug. 10 at 11 a.m. before Whittaker.

7/29/2005

Occult still big part of Nanticoke murder probe

By Elizabeth Skrapits , Staff Writer

Satanic elements might be involved in the murder of 24-year-old Stephen Novak, but officials can't say for sure. "They came across items involving the occult and things of that nature as part of the investigation," said Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas. Novak and a fellow Nanticoke resident, a close friend police have described as a person of interest in the case, both had enough guns, bayonets, and ammunition to outfit a small army. But the devil was in the details.

Police found many occult-related items in the home of Novak's friend, according to an inventory of seized property filed with Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke. There were candles, a metal statue of the Grim Reaper, a "666" sticker, a ceremonial dagger, two dolls, a metal coffin with a gargoyle on it, and a black box containing various religious items such as a crucifix and holy water bottles. Police also found literature including Clive Barker's Hellraiser and underground magazines, HeXen II and Malice video game boxes, and a calendar featuring the art of H. R. Giger. " (Authorities) are not commenting right now on what role it plays, but obviously they're interesting items they came across during the investigation," Lupas said. Ever since Novak was found dead under a Jeep Cherokee in a wooded area off West Main Street in Nanticoke July 16, investigators have been trying to gather background information on him and

anyone associated with him, Lupas said. In a request for another search warrant from Whittaker, police stated that on July 20 investigators searched Novak's residence and found numerous publications and CDs related to the occult and satanic worship, as well as what appeared to be animal skulls. Lupas said authorities are not sure what Satanism or the occult might have to do with the case, but investigators are looking into it. So far they have made a lot of progress, compiling a timeline and piecing the case together, Lupas said. Asked if authorities may be making an arrest soon, Lupas replied, "Hopefully, if they keep progressing. Obviously their goal is to build a case to where an arrest may be made, but they are not to that point yet."

7/29/2005

More items fuel cops' occult hunt in fatality

Friend of homicide victim Stephen Novak denies group involved in satanic rituals.

By dweiss@leader.net

A crucifix, bottles of holy water, a 666 sticker, a medal of the grim reaper, and a coffin with a gargoyle were among the 45 items police seized from Brandon Obaza's home last week, court papers say.

The items, which police say could be related to the occult or satanic worship, were detailed in an inventory sheet related to a search warrant in the investigation of Stephen Novak's homicide.

Investigators from the city, state and Luzerne County executed the warrant for Obaza's East Ridge Street home on July 22, six days after the 24-year-old Novak was found pinned under a Jeep owned by the Obaza family in a wooded area off West Main Street July 16.

No one has been charged in the death, but police said they believe Obaza left the homicide scene to return to his home. The inventory sheet also said police seized a gold-colored ceremonial dagger, spikes, a star-shaped candle holder, a black box containing religious items, syringes, bibles, two dolls, six guns, and a pistol crossbow .

Police said they want to examine any items related to the occult or satanic worship to see if it is a link between the two close friends.

But that's nothing more than a stereotype, said a friend of Obaza and Novak.

The friend, Josh Jones, said he's known both men for years. And he can assure people Obaza and Novak, along with other friends in their group, did not dabble in satanic worship.

"We've been stereotyped," the 24-year-old Wilkes-Barre resident said. "Brandon and Steve were inseparable. They were like brothers."

Police have been pursuing the satanic aspect of the case since finding Novak's body.

It was found several hundred yards from an area where police investigated a pile of 25 to 30 burned and mutilated animal remains found in a "circular-type altar" in April 2004. Police, at the time, could not speculate whether the animal slayings were related to any type of satanic rituals.

And, in the days after the death, police found various items, including compact discs and literature related to the occult and satanic worship, animal skulls, and weapons at the Obaza and Novak homes, they said.

Jones admits he and his friends, at times, dress in all black, hang out in the popular wooded area near where the animal bones were found, and listen to dark metal music such as Cradle of Filth and My Dying Bride. But the group was never into rituals, he said.

"We listen to it," Jones said. "We like music."

The group, with Novak and Obaza, had a "good time" together, Jones said. They would congregate like most other friends, having pizza or sometimes going out in the wooded area just to get away from everyone, go for a walk, or sit around and have a few beers, he said.

Jones spoke Wednesday, a day before police revealed what they found at the Obaza home. Jones could not be reached Thursday after police filed the inventory report.

Police also secured two additional search warrants Wednesday at District Judge Donald Whittaker's office to examine contents of four garbage bags given to police by Obaza's mother, and to examine contents of two computers. Obaza's mother found some "disturbing" items in Obaza's room and put them in the bags to be thrown out, police said.

Police believe there might be forensic evidence in the bags and computers, the warrants state.

They also want to examine the computers to see if Obaza frequented Web sites "associated with the occult and/or satanic worship" or see any electronic communications between Obaza and Novak.

7/27/2005

Few details available about Nanticoke homicide

By Elizabeth Skrapits , Staff Writer

The man identified by authorities as a person of interest in the homicide of Stephen Novak of Nanticoke was involuntarily committed to Mercy Hospital in Wilkes-Barre July 17.

The man, who police identified as a close friend of Novak's, was committed after an apparent suicide attempt, according to a search warrant filed last week. It could not be determined whether he remained at Mercy on Tuesday.

Nanticoke police requested the warrant from District Judge William Amesbury of Wilkes-Barre to obtain the clothes the friend was wearing at the time he entered Mercy.

Novak's body was found beneath a Jeep Cherokee parked in a wooded area behind the Turkey Hill store on West Main Street in Nanticoke at approximately 7:21 p.m. July 16.

The friend's father left an interview with police at 3 a.m. July 17, almost eight hours after Novak's body was found. About 15 minutes later, when police called the friend's residence, they could hear what sounded like the father and son arguing over a gun.

On arrival, police saw the father trying to subdue the son. The father told police his son had just placed a loaded handgun to his head and pulled the trigger.

Based on information provided by the father, Nanticoke police seized a Glock .45 caliber handgun with a 13-round magazine and one live .45 caliber bullet the friend allegedly used in his suicide attempt.

Earlier in the day of Novak's death, he and his friend visited three gun shops together. Owners and employees were interviewed by police and cautioned not to talk to the media.

Store personnel at two of the gun shops did confirm the men had been there and were previous customers.

Ken Piestrak of Piestrak's Gun Shop in Nanticoke did not notice anything unusual about Novak and his companion's visit that Saturday.

"They seemed like good kids," Piestrak said.

Nanticoke police were aware Novak's friend owned several weapons. Police requested Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker issue a search warrant for them.

The friend's family Jeep, under which Novak's body was found, contained two rifles and a total of seven boxes of ammunition, police discovered after a search.

In the neatly kept brick-front single-family home on East Ridge Street where Novak lived with his aunt, police found a Remington rifle, a handgun, and a canister containing 47 .50 caliber Browning machine gun rounds.

Novak's death was ruled a homicide, the cause multiple traumatic injuries.

Coroner Dr. George E. Hudock Jr. said Novak died from head injuries, but could not say what caused them.

Law enforcement officials are being tight-lipped about the ongoing investigation. Nanticoke police and District Attorney David Lupas would not comment about the case.

Novak's body was found in the same wooded area where 25 to 30 sets of animal remains were discovered on April 4, 2004.

The area is on the border between Nanticoke and Newport Township, and the police departments conducted a joint probe. No arrests were made in the case, Nanticoke police said.

Cindy Starke of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Luzerne County, which assisted in the investigation, said the Pennsylvania Game Commission was called in to identify the bones.

The game commission believed they belonged to game animals, but couldn't state definitively if there were cat, dog, or even human bones in the mix without a forensic test, Starke said.

Police said last year there was a possibility the placement of the remains could be related to ritualistic activity. They had received complaints about peculiar behavior in the area, including of people dressed in black standing around a fire.

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7/27/2005

Incident uncovered in probe

Affidavit reveals Brandon Obaza put gun to his head after Stephen Novak's death.

By dweiss@leader.net

Hours after a Jeep Cherokee he drove was found atop his dead friend, Brandon Obaza put a .45-caliber pistol to his head and pulled the trigger, trying to shoot himself, according to a search warrant affidavit.

His father, David, watched, and heard the gun click before he was able to subdue his son until police converged on their East Ridge Street home early July 17.

That event, which unfolded nearly eight hours after police found 24-year-old Stephen Novak pinned underneath the Obaza Jeep led to police uncovering various occult and satanic materials, along with animal skulls, that could be

connected to the homicide investigation.

The details were released in a search warrant filed at District Judge Donald Whittaker's Nanticoke office.

The warrant, filed by city Detective Capt. William Shultz, said investigators believe Obaza left the homicide scene after the death and went to his home. Investigators needed to search the Obaza home for forensic evidence at the scene, the warrant said.

No one has been charged in the death. Police have said they have a person of interest in the case; however, they have not identified that person. They could not be reached for comment Monday.

Novak was found dead around 7:30 p.m. July 16 in a wooded area off West Main Street near where police previously investigated a pile of about 25 to 30 burned and mutilated animal remains found in a "circular-type altar." City police Sgt. Kevin Grevera in April 2004 said he could not speculate if the animal slayings were related to any type of satanic rituals.

Novak was found dead several hundred yards from that site.

An autopsy showed he died of multiple traumatic injuries with a crushing injury to the head. The death was ruled a homicide.

Police have been investigating the death and filed the search warrant in connection with the case.

According to the warrant:

Police, knowing the Jeep at the homicide scene belonged to Obaza's father, spoke to his father, David, around 2 a.m. July 17 at police headquarters.

Brandon Obaza had not been home since early July 16 and police were trying to find him. But they knew he had numerous weapons at his home and asked David Obaza to secure the weapons when he went home.

They also wanted him to call police when he secured the guns or if he saw his son.

When Obaza failed to call police within 15 minutes of leaving the station, Shultz called the Obaza residence and overheard David and Brandon Obaza arguing over a gun.

Shultz dispatched officers to the home.

David Obaza told police he went home to secure the weapons, as police asked, and entered Brandon's bedroom.

That's where he saw Brandon on the bed with the pistol in his hand. Brandon immediately stood up and put the gun to his head. David tried getting the gun from Brandon, but Brandon resisted.

The two had a confrontation for several minutes, with Brandon repeatedly putting the gun to his head, one time pulling the trigger.

David heard the "firing mechanism" click, but the gun did not fire. David then subdued his son.

The warrant said Brandon Obaza was taken to police headquarters, but it does not say if he was jailed.

His mother later told police she found a number of "disturbing" items that she put in garbage bags to throw out. She described the items as "literature and compact discs related to death, the occult," and/or satanic worship.

The items, along with Brandon Obaza's personal journal and laptop computer, were given to police but were not immediately examined. Police also recovered two guns, three knives and ammunition from the Obaza Jeep.

Police searched Novak's home at 222 E. Ridge St., on June 20 and recovered two guns, a sword and bayonet, ammunition for a machine gun, animal skulls and material related to the occult and/or satanic worship, the warrant said.

It also said Novak and Obaza went to at least three gun dealers on July 16 and bought weapons and ammunition.

The Novak and Obaza families had no comment Monday.

But neighbors of each of the families said they were surprised by the homicide and the satanic revelations.

"They were always nice to me," said one Obaza neighbor who asked not to be identified. Occasionally, though, she would see Obaza and some friends dressed in all black. She stressed she did not want to judge them on that aspect.

Novak and Obaza both seemed like typical people who never created problems in their neighborhoods, other said.

"He was a nice guy," a Novak neighbor said.

7/23/2005

Satanic items found in search of homes

By Edward Lewis , Staff Writer

Authorities recovered items used in satanic worship from the Nanticoke homes of Stephen Novak, who was found dead under a Jeep last Saturday, and a male friend police described as "a person of interest" in a search warrant application filed Friday with Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke.

Luzerne County District Attorney David W. Lupas would not confirm if the person of interest is a suspect in Novak's death.

"I don't use any of those terms," Lupas said. "You could read it (search warrant) for what it is. It is still an ongoing

investigation.

"Investigators continue to build a case. Hopefully, they can reach a point when charges can be filed. But there is still work to be done."

Novak, 25, East Ridge Street, was found dead at about 7:30 p.m. July 16 in a wooded area off Main Street, Nanticoke, that is popular with all-terrain vehicle riders and target shooters.

An autopsy by Luzerne County Coroner Dr. George E. Hudock Jr. determined Novak's cause of death was multiple traumatic injuries, including a crushing head injury. Hudock ruled the manner of death a homicide.

According to the search warrant, the mother of the person of interest, who also lives on East Ridge Street, discovered numerous items in her son's bedroom that disturbed her.

The mother told authorities she found literature and compact discs relating to death, the occult and satanic worship. The mother placed the items in four garbage bags with the intention of throwing them out. She voluntarily gave the bags to authorities, along with a personal journal and a laptop computer belonging to the person of interest, who police described as Novak's close friend.

Four days after his body was found, authorities searched Novak's bedroom and recovered numerous publications and compact discs relating to satanic worship and the occult, animal skulls, a 2-foot sword, a bayonet, several firearms and ammunition.

Authorities learned Novak and his friend had visited three gun dealerships in the Nanticoke area, where they purchased firearms and ammunition the day Novak was killed.

Several hours after Novak's body was found, authorities interviewed his friend's father at the Nanticoke police station. The father allegedly told authorities he hadn't seen his son that day and refused to allow a search of his home to secure his son's firearms. The father told police he would contact them when his son returned home.

The father left the police department at about 3 a.m. About 15 minutes later, Nanticoke police Det. William Shultz called the father and overheard the father and son arguing.

Det. Shultz, county Det. Lt. Gary Capitano and other officers responded to the home where they heard screaming. Police entered and found the father attempting to subdue his son.

The father told police when he returned home, he encountered his son holding a loaded .45 caliber Glock handgun to his head. A struggle ensued between the two, and the father led his son into a different room and kept him there until police arrived.

Police recovered the handgun along with other firearms and ammunition belonging to the son.

Lupas said the Jeep, which is owned by the father of the person of interest, was impounded and searched by the state police Forensic Services Unit. In it were two rifles, three knives and ammunition, according to a search warrant for the Jeep filed Wednesday.

The search warrant authorized by Whittaker on Friday permits authorities to search Novak's friend's home.

A section of the application lists items to be searched for and seized. These include photographs, weapons consisting of firearms and knives, blood, blood spatter, saliva, DNA, hair, fingerprints, cell phones, and items relating to satanic worship such as literature and compact discs, animal or human bones, teeth, carcass parts and props used in ritualistic occult activity.

7/20/2005

Police have 'good handle' on homicide case

By Robert Kalinowski, Staff Writer

Stephen S. Novak Sr. slowly exited Earl W. Lohman Funeral Home on Tuesday afternoon to get some fresh air.

For nearly two hours, he had watched dozens of people pass through the Nanticoke funeral parlor to pay their final respects to his son.

"I don't even know what to say," the 54-year-old dad said before returning for the final minutes of the wake. "I am just shocked."

Three days earlier, his son, Stephen S. Novak Jr., was found dead beneath the wheels of a Jeep along a dirt road in a remote area off West Main Street, Nanticoke.

Authorities say the 25-year-old was run over by the vehicle and left there to die.

He died from multiple traumatic injuries, including a crushing head injury, the coroner's office said.

Novak Sr. said his quiet and mild-mannered son didn't deserve such a fate.

The killing has the family in agony, he said.

"It is truly a tragedy," Novak Sr. said. "I'm just confused about the whole thing."

Novak Sr. is hoping police will eventually catch the person responsible, "but right now I just want to bury my son."

"Investigators have a good theory on what occurred, and they are trying to piece it together," said Luzerne County District Attorney Dave Lupas.

Lupas said he and members of his staff met with investigators from Nanticoke and state police for about two hours Tuesday to discuss the case.

Nanticoke previously said investigators had a "person of interest," but Lupas wouldn't say if there is a suspect or if an arrest is near.

He reaffirmed previous comments that investigators "have a good handle on the situation."

Police have not revealed the Jeep owner's identity, only saying it wasn't Novak.

"There's a lot of things we know," he said. "But, there's a lot of details we don't want to release at this time."

The unique nature of the killing prevents authorities from being more specific, he said.

"What's different about this case is the method of the killing - the way the vehicle was used to kill the victim," Lupas said. "Most of our information points to the fact of him being run over and dying at the scene."

Police have spoken to several people, but they would still like to speak with more individuals who might be able to better corroborate the timeline and chain of events that led to Novak's death, Lupas said.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 or state police at Wyoming at 697-2000.

7/19/2005

DA: Death probe progressing

Police eye a "person of interest" in Stephen Novak case.

By dweiss@leader.net

The tire marks imprinted in culm and leading to the embankment where police found the body of 25-year-old Stephen Novak three days ago were still visible Monday afternoon.

Meanwhile, investigators from the city, along with officers from the state police and Luzerne County District Attorney's Office continued trying to figure out who killed the East Ridge Street resident.

City Detective William Shultz said police have a "person of interest" in the case; however, Shultz said he could not release specifics of the investigation, including the person's name.

"They have a good handle on the situation right now," Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas said of the investigators.

Novak was found pinned under a Jeep Cherokee along a dirt road off West Main Street around 7:30 p.m. Saturday. An autopsy showed Novak died from a crushing injury to his head. He also suffered deep lacerations and puncture wounds from trees, Coroner Dr. George E. Hudock said.

He ruled the death a homicide.

Police returned to the scene Monday to further examine the scene. Trees, bent and with bark scraped from them, stood near where Novak was found.

Shultz said the Jeep did not belong to Novak. The detective would not release the name of the Jeep's owner.

Shultz said Novak likely knew his assailant, and the death was not a random act.

The area where Novak was found is littered with garbage and other debris. The road runs on abandoned coal mining land several hundred yards behind West Main Street businesses.

The area is a popular spot for off-road vehicles and drinking parties.

Lupas asked that anyone who saw Novak around the time of the incident contact Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

7/18/2005

Nanticoke death ruled homicide

A man found Saturday night pinned under a Jeep died from a crushing head injury, coroner says.

BY kkopec@leader.net

Luzerne County Coroner George Hudock has ruled a man who was found pinned under a Jeep along a dirt road in Nanticoke on Saturday night is a homicide victim.

The male, identified according to televised reports as Stephen Novak, 25, of Nanticoke, died from a crushing injury to the head, Hudock said.

Initial reports were that the man was shot, but Hudock said the autopsy revealed otherwise.

"I'm still waiting for more information from police, but right now I'm presuming he was run over by the Jeep."

In addition to the head injury, the victim suffered several deep lacerations to the head, facial abrasions and two deep puncture wounds to the body.

"He had branches and pieces of trees stuck into him," Hudock said.

The jeep was turned on its side, he said, with the victim pinned beneath it when emergency personnel responded Saturday evening at about 7 p.m.

"They had to use air bags to release the body from under the vehicle."

Nanticoke police did not return several calls seeking comment Sunday.

Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas could not be reached for comment.

7/17/2005

Unidentified Body Found

An unidentified body was found Friday evening in a wooded area near the Turkey Hill Minit Market on West Main Street.

Investigators arrived at 7 p.m. and were still on the scene at 11:30 p.m.

Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas, Pennsylvania State Police, Nanticoke police and a county coroner were among officials at the scene.

6/30/2005

Nanticoke teen injured in bike crash

A 19-year-old man was hospitalized after he drove his bike into a truck Tuesday evening, officer Joe Guydosh of the Nanticoke police department said.

According to Guydosh:

Chad Fullerton of Nanticoke was riding his bike in the 100 block of Church Street at about 6:30 p.m. when he crashed into a truck driven by James Bates, also of Nanticoke.

Fullerton appeared to have suffered a head injury and was flown to Scranton Community Medical Center, police said.

On Wednesday, a spokeswoman for CMC said Fullerton is in satisfactory condition.

Police said Fullerton was not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident and no citations are expected to be issued.

6/25/2005

Drugs reported stolen from Nanticoke pharmacy

By Robert Kalinowski Staff Writer

Crooks broke into Nanticoke's Spotanski's Pharmacy early Thursday morning and stole a still-unknown amount of prescription drugs, Nanticoke police said.

It was the second burglary at the family-owned 243 E. Prospect St. store since May 10, Capt. William Shultz said.

In both break-ins, thieves pried open the front door with an unknown device, he said.

The pharmacy's owner, Joseph Edmundowicz, and his staff were still conducting a store-wide inventory by closing time Thursday to determine how much was stolen, Shultz said.

Shultz was unsure how much was taken in the May burglary.

"At this point, we're just looking for anyone who may have seen anything suspicious," he said.

Spotanski's Pharmacy has been the target of criminals before, Shultz noted.

The evening of June 7 a brick was thrown through the store's front window, which faces the city's hub, Patriot Square, he said.

On Oct. 7, 2004, an armed bandit entered the store during business hours demanding the powerful drug, OxyContin, and fled with the drugs.

That 2004 robbery occurred just two days before another

Nanticoke family-owned drug store's entire stock of six powerful painkillers was swiped in an overnight burglary.

Because desperate people will take desperate measures, pharmacy operators must enhance their security systems to prevent becoming targets and victims, Shultz urged.

There are no suspects.

6/9/2005

Auto Accident between a motor vehicle and pedestrian

Michael Simone had parked his pick-up-truck in front of his home located on East Spring Street in Nanticoke.

Pedestrian Barbara Walk was seated in the L.C.T.A. Bus Stop Shelter across from East Main Street. Simone's truck jumped out of gear and rolled forward in a North-Easterly direction for approximately 95 feet crossing Spring Street and down an embankment to the Bus Stop Shelter. The truck struck and destroyed the Bus Shelter with Walk still inside the

Shelter. Walk was able to crawl from under the truck.

Walk was transported to CMC Hospital in Scranton by Nanticoke City Ambulance.

5/21/2005

Police have no suspects in Newport Township drive-by shooting

By Robert Kalinowski , Staff Writer

Police investigating the May 5 drive-by shooting in Newport Township interviewed a person Thursday they hope could help solve the case, Newport Township Police Chief Carl Smith said Friday.

The unidentified person,

Smith said, is one of several "names we're checking out" in connection with the incident.

More than two weeks since 10 bullets were fired at 1250-1251 Center St., Wanamie, in the middle of the night, there are no suspects and an arrest is not imminent, the chief said.

"We're not magicians. We can't just snap our fingers and find the suspect," he said.

Due to a lack of evidence, investigators have been leery to speculate on a motive for the shooting, though many others have made public their theories, the chief said.

From the moment the shots rang out, Lisa Arnold, who lives next door at 1252 Center St., has maintained the shots were meant for her. The shooting came exactly one year to the day her husband, Mark, allegedly shot and killed 20-year-old Nicholas Havard.

She thinks it was payback for the fatal shooting and the bullets just happened to strike the wrong house.

Mr. Arnold, who remains locked up on murder charges, has said the 2004 shooting was accidental and he merely was trying to scare a group of kids harassing his son.

Mrs. Arnold said that during the past year, she and the couple's three children have been the victims of threats motivated by Mr. Arnold's alleged role in the shooting.

The threats, she said, forced her to pull her 15-year-old daughter from Greater Nanticoke Area High School and place her on "homebound," a program where students are instructed at their homes by district teachers.

Tom Kubasek, principal, confirmed Mrs. Arnold's daughter is now on "homebound" at the request of her mother and approval of medical professionals; however he couldn't say why due to privacy issues.

He did say that there are no documented threats against the girl at school.

On Friday, Smith said his department has gotten numerous complaints from Mrs. Arnold about "perceived threats" since the 2004 shooting, but nothing to warrant an arrest.

She requested additional patrols in her neighborhood and officers tried to "keep a close eye" on her house, he said.

Mrs. Arnold had her own way to monitor her home - four closed-circuit video cameras mounted on the sides of her home.

On the night of the shooting, though, the one atop the front porch was down for repairs.

There are no known witnesses.

Police have nearly a dozen casings of .22 caliber stored as evidence they will try to match with a weapon if a suspect is nabbed, Smith said.

Two people - including a sleeping 10-year-old girl - inside 1250-1251 Center St. were nearly struck by bullets. Eight members of the Zaborney family who share the double block are still in shock over the shooting and are looking for answers.

"Someone is definitely sitting back laughing about this. I hope they get caught," said Mrs. Arnold.

That will be easier said than done, Smith said.

"With no witnesses we got to scratch for everything we could get," he said.

Smith wasn't able to say if the person interviewed Thursday offered any helpful information.

More interviews will be conducted future with a list of people investigators think could have critical information to solve the case, he said.

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call police at 735-2000 or state police at Wyoming at 697-2000.

5/16/2005

Car smashes into Kanjorski Center; two injured

By Nichole Dobo , Staff Writer

A car smashed into the Kanjorski Center seriously injuring two women Sunday afternoon.

Lynne Small, 44, the driver, and passenger Lorraine Della Penna, of Nanticoke, were flown to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, said Sgt. Kevin Grevera, of the Nanticoke Police Department.

Nanticoke Fire Department Deputy Chief Jay Munson said the passenger was unconscious when they arrived. The driver had cuts, bruises and a broken leg, he said. The women were not wearing seat belts, he said. A nursing supervisor at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville could not comment on the condition of the women. The car - a rental - was northbound on Prospect Street when it blew through a stop sign, hopped the curb and plowed into the Kanjorski Center's concrete exterior, Grevera said. There were no visible skid marks from the stop sign at Main and Prospect streets to the crash site.

No other injuries were reported.

It was not clear if the car had a mechanical failure or if it was a driving error, Grevera said.

"They never stopped," said John Senchak, a witness to the accident. "It was like, pow, and then there was stuff flying everywhere. They hit hard."

Bits of metal and specks of glass covered the sidewalk surrounding the car were swept up by emergency crews after the gray Toyota was towed. The car's four silver hubcaps - hurled off from the impact - were tucked under the arm of a firefighter.

Senchak said he was sitting on a bench at the Uni-Mart across the street from the building when he saw the car fly down the road into the building. The first on the scene, he cradled the unconscious passenger's hand between his while trying to console the driver who was screaming for help, Senchak said.

"She was screaming 'Get me out of here,'" he said while gazing at the crumpled car atop a tow truck. "Her legs were trapped under the steering column."

Marie Smith, of Nanticoke, said she was out window shopping when she saw the car drive straight through the intersection, barely missing a van before hitting the building.

"I was at the flower shop and the next thing I know this car is flying down the road and hits the Kanjorski Center," she said.

5/6/2005

Woman: Shots at neighbor's house meant for me

Newport Twp. home is next door to man accused in fatal shooting

By kwernowsky@leader.net

The wife of a man accused of shooting a 20-year-old believes she was a target of a drive-by shooting that struck her neighbor's house early Thursday morning.

"I think they got the wrong house," Lisa Arnold said.

Thursday marked the one-year anniversary of the death of Nicholas Havard, 20, of Nanticoke, who was shot in the face with a .22-caliber pistol at point-blank range after an argument outside a Newport Township bar.

Arnold's husband, Mark Arnold, is accused of the shooting and is scheduled to go to trial on homicide charges on Sept. 19.

It was just after 1:30 a.m. Thursday when a string of gunshots stirred Lisa Arnold's neighbor, Albert Zaborney Sr. of 1251 Center St., from his sleep.

"It sounded like fast, rapid gunfire," he said. "My wife yelled 'get down, get down.' She tried to call 911 but she was shaking and she couldn't dial the phone."

Bullets pierced a car and a truck in the driveway and several shots broke windows and damaged the home's vinyl siding - 10 shots in all. One shot struck about 15 inches above the couch where Zaborney's granddaughter Samantha was sleeping in the adjacent apartment where Zaborney's son and daughter-in-law live.

Zaborney has lived in the same home since 1973, and he said things on his stretch of Center Street aren't usually so tense.

"Everything is usually quiet," he said. "Everybody minds their own business."

The Zaborney family did not get a description of the car or of the shooter, but Albert Zaborney Sr. said they fled south on Center Street.

Lisa Arnold, who lives next door to the Zaborneys, said she has no doubt the bullets that damaged her neighbor's house were meant for her. She wouldn't say outright that the shooting was a retaliation for Havard's death, but she said Thursday being exactly one year after his death made her suspicious.

"I think they were targeting this house," she said pointing to her home. "But they didn't know where we live."

Investigators are aware of the possible connection.

"Obviously we are," said officer Stanley Drevenak of the Newport Township Police Department. "It could only be a fluke, but we're really not sure at this point."

Detectives from the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office and the state police, along with Newport Township

officers, are all investigating the shooting. However, no arrests were made as of Thursday night.

5/6/2005

Woman says gunmen targeted wrong house

By Robert Kalinowski , Staff Writer

Looking at her neighbors' bullet-riddled Newport Township home, Lisa Arnold kept dabbing her eyes with a tissue. A feeling of guilt, she said, was driving the endless flow of tears.

The shooters, who pumped 10 shots - one that came an arm's length from striking a sleeping 10-year-old girl - in and around the double-block residence early Thursday morning, missed their target, Arnold believes.

Investigators have yet to comment on a possible motive, but Arnold doesn't think the drive-by shooting at 1250-1251 Center St., Wanamie, was a random act in the normally quiet section of town.

The flurry of 1:30 a.m. gunshots from a .22 caliber gun, she contends, were meant for her home next door - just several feet away from the double-block occupied by eight members of the close-knit Zaborney family.

It was payback gone awry, Arnold said.

Thursday's shooting came exactly one year to the day Arnold's husband, Mark, allegedly shot and killed 20-year-old Nicholas Havard on May 5, 2004.

The deadly shooting occurred approximately one-half mile from the Arnolds' home, in a parking lot outside Savitsky's Edge bar.

Mrs. Arnold, police say, drove Mr. Arnold to and from the 2004 shooting, which Mr. Arnold claims was accidental. Mr. Arnold has said he was merely trying to scare a group of kids threatening his son.

Police have yet to launch a thorough investigation into Thursday's shooting, and have released few details so far. They did interview Mrs. Arnold early Thursday. She alleged to them that threats, including of shooting, have been made against her in the last year.

Authorities did not comment on a motive or a possible connection to Havard's death on Thursday night; however, they have not ruled it out.

Newport Township police and state police are in charge of the investigation. Detectives from the Luzerne County district attorney's office join the investigation today.

While investigators search for clues, Mrs. Arnold said she is left with a sense of guilt that two of the eight people sleeping in the neighboring home were nearly hit by the spray of bullets that were likely meant for her.

"I heard the gunshots about 1:30 in the a.m., rapid fire. I came down the steps from my house and my wife said, 'Get down, get down, the windows are shot out,'" said Al Zaborney, who lives in 1252 Center St.

His wife, Linda, was lying on a front room couch, and his sons, 18 and 36, were in their rooms, when the shots rang out.

Linda, who missed being hit by about six feet, called next door, to see if her son, Jason, and his family were OK.

Jason's wife, Sue, answered the phone, not aware the noises were gunshots. They became frantic, knowing their 10-year-old daughter, Samantha, was spending the night on a first-floor couch because she's getting a new bed.

Just as her parents were rushing downstairs, a frightened Samantha was running upstairs to her parents' room, still unaware of what the loud bangs were.

"I thought it was just firecrackers," said the Nanticoke Educational Center fourth grader, who was still visibly shaken Thursday night.

"We couldn't find the bullets in the house, so I looked to see if she got hit and then she sort of knew what was going on," said Sue.

Officers from Newport Township police, whose station is less than a quarter-mile from the shooting, arrived quickly. They were followed by officers from Nanticoke and state police.

It wasn't until officers shone their flashlights in and around the home that the tally of 10 bullets was made.

Most frightening for the Zaborney family was the one that pierced a wall one foot above the couch Samantha was sleeping on inside 1250 Center St.

Three bullets traveled inside 1251 Center St. and three inside 1250 Center St. Three were fired into a truck and one into a tree in front of the home.

Though Mrs. Arnold tells the Zaborneys they were not the targets, they are still afraid.

"They shot once. What's to say they're not going to come back again," Sue said.

"Everybody's hysterical and afraid. You don't know what to do or where to go," Al said. "You don't know what the person looks like, what his motive was."

Police did not say if they had any witnesses Thursday.

4/27/2005

Accidental Fire

A man was hospitalized Tuesday after a fire at his home that officials blamed on wiring in an aquarium.

According to Nanticoke fire department Line Chief Chet Prymowicz:

William Grabowski arrived home at 109 Loomis St. at about 2:30 p.m. just as the fire began.

None of his other family members were inside the residence, but Grabowski went into the house anyway in an attempt to save the family cat.

Grabowski was taken to Mercy Hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and complaints of chest pains. His condition was not available as of Tuesday night.

The cause of the fire was deemed an accident and no further investigation is expected. The cat was not injured.

4/27/2005

Woman Bitten By Dog

A woman was taken to the hospital after police say she was bitten by a dog outside the gas station where she worked.

According to Nanticoke police officer Bryan Kata:

Marie Natalini, 42, of Nanticoke, brought two dogs, a golden retriever and a boxer mix, to the Turkey Hill gas station at 460 W. Main St. shortly before 4 p.m.

Store employee Wendy Peters, 44, of Alden, came outside to pet the dogs.

A friend took Peters to Wilkes-Barre Mercy Hospital for treatment. Police are not expected to file charges.

4/8/2005

Devins expresses remorse during sentencing hearing

By Edward Lewis , Staff Writer

Turning toward the families of two victims killed in an alcohol-related car crash, Eugene William Devins, the driver, said he was the one who should have been killed.

"I can't say how sorry I really am," Devins, 42, said tearfully. "I've said every day, it should have been me."

Devins of Saranac, N.Y., was convicted of vehicular homicide by a Luzerne County jury on Jan. 21. He caused a crash with his 2003 Honda on Lower Broadway Street, Nanticoke, that killed his wife, Verna, 37, and 19-year-old Donna Roushey on Oct. 30, 2003. They were passengers in the rear seat of Devins' vehicle.

Prosecutors claimed Devins' blood alcohol content was 0.136 percent when he lost control of his vehicle and crashed into a 1994 Jeep Cherokee after crossing the West Nanticoke Bridge at a high rate of speed.

At his sentencing hearing before Judge Thomas F. Burke Jr. on Thursday, the families of the victims and Devins, who filled the courtroom, cried.

Devins' family, including his son Eugene W. Devins Jr., asked Judge Burke to impose a lenient sentence, saying they needed him to be home.

"It's bad enough my mom is gone," Devins Jr. said. "Now you're taking away everything I have left. It was an accident and I know for a fact he would take both their places."

"We all miss her very much," said Myra Nesbitt of Warrior Run, who is Mrs. Devins' sister. "He knows he did wrong. He needs to be home with his children."

"I can't say how many times he said to me if he could change places with Donna and Verna, he would," said Devins' defense lawyer, William Urbanski. "Eugene Devins can't change what happened."

"There are no winners here; there are only losers," Urbanski said.

Judge Burke imposed the mandatory minimum sentence of three to six years on each separate count of homicide by vehicle while driving under the influence of alcohol. He was also sentenced to concurrent terms of 18 to 36 months on separate counts of homicide by vehicle, 16 to 32 months on a single count of aggravated assault while DUI, and 48 hours to one year on separate counts of DUI.

He was also ordered to pay \$405 in fines for several traffic offenses, and \$57 in restitution to Nanticoke police.

Devins' sentence amounted to six to 12 years in a state correctional institution.

During the three-day trial in January, Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Michael Vough presented several witnesses, including state Trooper Todd Norton.

State Trooper Norton, an accident reconstructionist, estimated Devins was driving 59 miles per hour when he lost control. The posted speed limit in the area is 25 mph.

Vough alleged Devins and his wife were drinking alcohol at the American Legion in Nanticoke on Oct. 29, 2003. They

left the Legion at about midnight and arrived at the Poplar Street, West Nanticoke, residence of David Romanowski, a nephew of Mrs. Devins.

Romanowski and Roushey were dating and went with Devins and his wife to get food.

While driving across the bridge, Devins lost control and struck the Jeep, operated by Edward Stavetski, who suffered broken bones in his foot and hand and torn ligaments in his leg.

Urbanski presented a defense that speed and the contour of the bridge caused the crash, not alcohol. He also claimed headlights from Stavetski's Jeep had blinded Devins.

The bridge is angled, with one section crossing the Susquehanna River and another spanning ground on the Nanticoke side.

3/26/2005

Arson suspected in house blaze

Ex-tenants' furniture was at site of suspicious fire, says cop.

By rlieback@leader.net

Police suspect a fire that gutted an Oak Street home early Friday morning was set intentionally.

"I believe the (state police) fire marshal will list it as arson," Capt. William Schultz said of the fire at Rear 108 Oak Street.

City officials have visited the building multiple times in the past month:

On March 3, the structure was condemned. More recently police shot and killed a pit bull on the porch after the dog charged 10 people.

Schultz believes the fire started in the living room of an apartment where the previous residents, Eric Winters, 33, and his fiancée, Lisa Bolmer, 28, had furniture stored.

Winters and Bolmer were forced from the home when it was condemned, and reside in Edwardsville. They have been collecting their personal belongings from the dwelling since they moved.

"I'm surprised they were keeping their stuff in there that long," Schultz said.

He said the home had electricity, but he suspects it played no role in the fire because there were no electrical outlets where the fire started.

"The only other way it could have been accidental is if somebody was in the home Thursday night or early Friday," he said. "All parties (owner and previous tenants) were nowhere near the structure before the fire."

Fire Chief Mike Bohan said the department received a call to the fire at 3:53 a.m. and had it under control by 7 a.m.

Thirty firefighters were on the scene and no injuries occurred.

"Half of the roof was burned off and the structure was completely gutted," Bohan said.

Schultz said he contacted the owner, Gerald Altavilla, by telephone, but Altavilla was in the Poconos and would not be available for an interview until tonight or Monday.

The owner and previous tenants could not be reached for comment Friday.

"For now it is just a wait and see deal," he said.

Hanover Township firefighters assisted in fighting the blaze.

3/16/2005

Nanticoke crashes occur near each other

By kwernowsky@leader.net

Back-to-back crashes kept authorities busy Tuesday evening.

According to officer Joe Kosch:

The first crash occurred at about 5:30 p.m. when Celia Rominski, 73, of Nanticoke, was driving west in the 200 block of West Main Street.

Rominski said she was blinded by the sun's glare and drove her car over the curb and stuck a tree. The car rolled on its side. She wasn't seriously injured.

As rescue crews were leaving, a second crash occurred about 100 yards away. Daniel Kotsko, 53, of Nanticoke, was driving east on West Main Street when his vehicle was struck by a vehicle driven by Donald Dougherty, 36, of Nanticoke.

Kotsko was taken to Scranton Community Medical Center after he blacked out. Dougherty, his wife, Susan, and their children, ages 2, 4 and 10, were taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. Their injuries were not considered serious.

3/12/2005

Accused killer, wife named in civil lawsuit

By Ed Lewis , Staff Writer

A murder suspect was named in a wrongful death civil action lawsuit filed in Luzerne County Court on Friday by the victim's parents.

Mark Arnold, 38, Newport Township, is criminally accused of killing Nicholas Havard, 20, Nanticoke, on May 5. Arnold learned that several kids were looking for his son because of an altercation. He and several members of his family followed three cars that drove slowly past their home on Center Street.

The cars stopped on Old Newport Street where the kids began yelling at Arnold.

Arnold got out of his vehicle and engaged in a confrontation with the group when he allegedly pulled out a .22 caliber handgun from his pants and shot Havard, according to the affidavit.

Arnold allegedly told authorities he only wanted to scare the kids.

Arnold is charged with first-degree murder and firearms not to be carried without a license. His criminal trial is set to begin April 25.

Havard's parents, David Havard and wife, Jacqueline, and their son, Derek, as administrators to their deceased son's estate, filed the four-count wrongful death civil lawsuit against Arnold and his wife, Lisa Arnold.

According to the civil suit, Mr. Arnold allegedly carried a firearm and accosted Havard while under the influence of narcotic medications, which impaired his judgement and failed to properly secure the firearm to prevent any accidental discharge.

Havard's family is seeking \$50,000 on each count, including the victim's loss of future earning power, retirement benefits, Social Security income and funeral expenses.

Attorney Matthew D. Dempsey filed the lawsuit on behalf of Havard's family.

3/11/2005

'Vicious' dog shot, killed in Nanticoke

Police say the pit bull charged 10 people Wednesday night.

By jfox@leader.net

Police shot and killed a pit bull Wednesday night after trying to corral the dog for nearly two hours in the city's Hanover section.

Officers who attempted to pacify the animal described it as the most violent they had encountered in their combined 40 years of experience.

The 90-pound male dog charged six residents and four police officers during the standoff, police said.

According to police reports:

Just after 6 p.m., Gerald Altavilla, the apparent owner of a recently condemned home at Rear 108 Oak St., called emergency dispatchers to report that the former tenants of the residence had abandoned a "vicious dog" in the house, and he was concerned the animal would "get out and attack someone."

When police arrived, they found neither Altavilla nor the dog at the residence. The dog, police believe, escaped the home through a cellar door that had been blocked with plywood.

About 30 minutes later, police received a second call from a resident near the Oak Street home reporting that a pit bull had chased him.

When police returned, Sgt. Kevin Grevera found the dog unchained in an alleyway near the home. As the dog charged the resident who tipped police, the officers yelled, trying to distract the animal. The dog then leapt onto the driver's side of the police cruiser, growling, snarling and scratching, Grevera said.

Grevera sprayed the pit bull with mace and it moved back to the porch of the home. Grevera then contacted the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the dog warden and the state Game Commission asking for assistance in controlling the dog.

Grevera also called Capt. William Schultz and asked him to bring a shotgun.

After the animal charged at five more residents and the officers had not received assistance from animal control officers by 8:30 p.m., Schultz shot and killed the animal in front of the home, police said.

Eric Winters, 33, the dog's owner who was forced from the home when it was condemned on March 4, was stunned to learn of the shooting Thursday morning.

Blood still marked the spot of the shooting on porch of his former home, he said.

"I had him for three years," Winters said. "He's just like a kid to me."

Winters said he was periodically checking in on the dog as he and his fiancée, Lisa Bolmer, 28, looked for alternative housing.

Bolmer said the “dog wasn’t vicious” but was “protecting his property,” according to police reports. Police say the animal is the same dog that bit a resident Feb. 18, and that the resident was treated for puncture wounds and underwent rabies shots.

3/6/2005

Police have suspect in attempted robbery

Nanticoke police have a suspect in an attempted robbery Saturday at a Uni-Mart convenience store. Around 1:20 a.m., police said a man entered the store at 61 E. Main St., walked behind the counter and grabbed the clerk, pushing her out of the way. The man then attempted to access a drawer as the clerk yelled for a customer to call 911. At that point, the man fled on foot. No money was taken during the robbery. Although the robbery is still under investigation, Nanticoke police interviewed a "person of interest" and an arrest is expected, police said.

3/4/2005

Man charged in Newport Twp. shooting

Christopher Lee Banks, fired 10 shots at William Conway, but did not hit him, police said.By

kwernowsky@leader.net

State police arrested Christopher Lee Banks on Thursday afternoon on multiple charges stemming from a November shooting in Newport Township and an unrelated attempted robbery in Nanticoke.

According to state police in Wyoming:

William Conway was watching television at about 7:45 p.m. on Nov. 25. Moments later he got into an argument on the telephone with 23-year-old Banks.

Banks told Conway he wanted to meet somewhere to fight. Conway hung up the phone and Banks called back to let him know he was coming to Conway’s house on Railroad Street in Newport Township.

Fifteen minutes later, Conway was standing on his front porch when Banks showed up pointing a gun at Conway.

“What’s up now, you want to holler at me?” Banks said as he fired 10 shots from a .22 caliber handgun. The gunfire missed Conway and damaged his porch and a neighbor’s vehicle.

Conway grabbed a shotgun he kept inside his front door and fired two shots toward the woods across the street as Banks and an unknown male fled the scene.

Police also linked Banks to the attempted robbery and assault of a Nanticoke couple.

According to Nanticoke police:

On September 18, Michael Dickshinski and his fiancée, Patricia Shilanskis, were driving home from a friend’s house when a vehicle began to follow them.

They pulled into the Curry Donuts parking lot at 185 S. Market St. Christopher and Daniel Banks and a male juvenile got out of a gold vehicle.

Daniel Banks ran over to the passenger-side door and ripped it open, damaging the hinge. The juvenile demanded money.

Dickshinski said he didn’t have any, so the juvenile leaned inside the vehicle and began punching Dickshinski, who leaned over to protect Shilanskis, who was five months pregnant at the time.

The couple asked the juvenile how much money he wanted. He told them “\$150.” The couple said they didn’t have any money.

Christopher Banks walked around to the passenger-side door and kicked Dickshinski in the right side of the face and all three fled the area in an awaiting gold vehicle.

Dickshinski received five stitches above his nose at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.

Daniel Banks and the juvenile were arrested on charges related to the attempted robbery.

Christopher Banks faces numerous charges including: firearms not to be carried without a license, simple assault in the shooting; and criminal attempted robbery, criminal conspiracy, simple assault, harassment, disorderly conduct and criminal mischief in the robbery.

He was arraigned by District Justice Donald Whittaker Thursday afternoon and is being held in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$125,000 bail in both cases.

Police arrested Banks’ ex-girlfriend, Eva Maslar, 19, Thursday, on a charge of hindering Banks’ arrest.

2/17/2005

Moscow man charged in fatal mishap that occurred in Rice Twp.

By Robert Kalinowski , Staff Writer

A Moscow man was charged Wednesday in connection with a fatal vehicle-versus-pedestrian accident that occurred nearly five months ago on Interstate 81 in Rice Township.

State police at Hazleton said William R. Sullenberger Jr., 35, was driving under the influence when his vehicle struck and killed Edward B. Ash, 35, of Nanticoke, near the Nuangola exit, on Sept. 23.

Sullenberger was charged with felony counts of homicide by vehicle while DUI and homicide by vehicle. He was also charged with two counts of DUI, along with several traffic citations, such as careless driving.

State police did not say what Sullenberger's blood alcohol content was at the time of the incident, but said it "exceeded the legal limit of 0.08 percent."

According to state police, Sullenberger was traveling in the right southbound lane of I-81 when he allegedly failed to negotiate a left curve and traveled off the roadway.

His 2002 Ford Explorer then struck Ash, who was standing on the berm of the road, state police said.

Luzerne County Deputy Coroner Tom Moran pronounced Ash dead at the scene from multiple traumatic injuries.

Following the incident, Sullenberger, who was traveling with three passengers, ages 22 through 25, exhibited signs of intoxication. He was then taken to Hazleton General Hospital for blood analysis, according to state police.

The incident occurred between mile markers 160.7 and 160.6 on I-81, about one mile away from the Nuangola exit, at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Until now, there has been no ruling on the manner of Ash's death.

State police did not indicate why it took nearly five months for charges to be filed.

Sullenberger was arraigned Wednesday in front of Magistrate Ronald Swank, Wright Township.

He was released on \$10,000 unsecured bail.

A preliminary hearing is set for Wednesday, Feb. 23, at 9 a.m. in front of Magistrate Swank.

2/10/2005

Nanticoke man sentenced for robbery

A Nanticoke man was sentenced in Luzerne County Court Wednesday for his role in a robbery in September.

Judge Michael Toole sentenced Jason Demski, 21, South Hanover Street, to 11 1/2 months minimum to 23 months maximum on a single count of robbery.

Jason Demski was permitted to serve his sentence at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Eric Karvaski was walking in the area of Washington and South Hanover streets, Nanticoke, on Sept. 5 when he was approached by Jason Demski, his brother, Gary Demski, 23, and Christopher Powell, 20, who demanded money.

Karvaski said he had no money and walked behind a church where the three assaulted him.

Nanticoke police said \$70 was taken from Karvaski's pants pocket. He suffered minor injuries.

Judge Toole denied a request by Jason Demski for work release. He was given credit for 156 days time served.

Attorney Shelley Centini represented Jason Demski.

Gary Demski, South Hanover Street, was charged with simple assault, and Powell, West Union Street, Nanticoke, was charged with robbery. Their cases have not been disposed.

2/10/2005

Alden Shooting Suspect Sought

State police at Wyoming have arrested one man and are looking for two other people in connection with a shooting on Nov 25 in Newport Township.

Police said David Maslar, 18, Alden, is charged with hindering the apprehension or prosecution of shooting suspect Christopher Banks.

Maslar was arraigned before Magistrate Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke and is incarcerated at Luzerne County Correctional Facility after failing to post \$50,000 bail.

Banks, 23, Nanticoke, allegedly fired nine rounds from a .22 caliber handgun at William Michael Conway.

Conway, 19, who was not injured, was standing on the front porch of his 49 Railroad St. residence at 7:45 p.m. when the shots were fired.

Banks fled the scene and remains at large. He is facing charges of aggravated assault, firearms not to be carried without a license, criminal mischief, simple assault and recklessly endangering another person.

Banks is described as lightskinned black male, 5 feet 10 inches, 185 pounds with brown eyes and black hair. He was last seen wearing a black leather jacket.

A woman, Eva Maslar, 19, also is facing a charge of hindering apprehension or prosecution.

No physical description of Eva Maslar was available from police.

Anyone with information regarding the location of Banks or Eva Maslar is asked to contact state police at Wyoming at 697-2000.

2/5/2005

Bloomsburg man charged in robbing pharmacy

Jason Zidek, 27, is accused of taking Duragesic-Fentanyl patches.

By KRIS WERNOWSKY kwernowsky@leader.net

A man who police say held up a pharmacy in October and stole prescription narcotics is being held in the Columbia County jail.

According to Nanticoke police:

Jason J. Zidek, 27, of Bloomsburg, was arrested on a parole violation there, but also faces charges in the Oct. 7 robbery of Spontanski's Pharmacy, 243 S. Prospect St., Nanticoke

Zidek entered the pharmacy shortly before 1 p.m. and demanded OxyContin, a highly addictive painkiller used in cancer treatment, from owner Joseph Edmundowicz.

Workers told Zidek they didn't have the 80 mg pills he wanted, so he demanded a smaller dose.

A frustrated Zidek went behind the counter and workers noticed he had a gun inside his sweater.

He began opening drawers and took a handful of Duragesic-Fentanyl patches, a highly addictive morphinelike painkiller, valued at almost \$4,000.

Police said Zidek was friends with Nicol M. Anderson, who used to work at the pharmacy. She told police that the two used to talk about where the drugs were located in the store.

On Oct. 7, Zidek demanded that Anderson get him a gun, but she could only supply him with her child's toy gun.

After he robbed the store with the toy pistol he came back to Anderson's apartment and bragged about the robbery. He gave Anderson and her husband, John, a couple of patches and went to the bathroom and got high, Nicol Anderson told police.

Zidek faces charges of robbery, taking property by force, robbery by threatening bodily injury, theft by unlawful taking or disposition, possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver and two conspiracy counts.

Zidek's preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 23.

Detective William Shultz said he expects to make more arrests on conspiracy charges later.

1/28/2005

Settlement in DUI death brings small relief to grieving family

Relative of teen settle suit against Scott Stobodzian, who got probation in criminal case.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

Probation was not enough punishment for the man who supplied beer to the driver in a crash that killed 16-year-old Meghan Hanko, the girl's mother said.

She hopes a settlement she recently reached in a lawsuit against Scott Stobodzian will make up for that lost justice.

"I do feel a little bit more of justice has come," Betsy Hanko said Thursday, a few days after reaching the settlement.

"But what justice could you get in this?"

Hanko and her attorney, Joseph Mariotti, would not reveal the amount of the out-of-court settlement reached late last week, citing the family's privacy.

Hanko and her husband filed suit against Stobodzian for buying the beer for an underage drinking party in Hanover Township in June 2001.

One of the partygoers, Eric Papp, gave Meghan Hanko, of Nanticoke; Kenneth Williams, 17, of Ashley; and two others a ride from the party.

Papp lost control of his speeding vehicle on Middle Road and crashed into a ditch, killing Hanko and Williams.

Papp pleaded guilty in 2003 to charges of homicide by motor vehicle while driving under the influence. He was sentenced to seven to 14 years in state prison.

Stobodzian pleaded guilty to supplying the alcohol and was sentenced to six months probation, Mariotti said.

That, Hanko said, was like a "little slap on the wrist" for the amount of grief Stobodzian created for Hanko's family and friends.

The death spurred the family to start a \$1,000 scholarship fund through Greater Nanticoke Area High School for a graduating student.

Hanko hopes her daughter's death will remind youths that they are not invincible, and the same thing that happened to Meghan can happen to them, she said.

Hanko still becomes emotional talking about her daughter. Luckily, she said, family has guided her through rough times. "I've had a lot of support from family and friends," she said.

1/26/2005

Drug Charges

Two men and a juvenile were arrested on drug charges late Monday night after a traffic stop on Main Street.

State police said a substance, believed to be marijuana, was found inside the vehicle.

Kevin Jones, 20, and William Pampus, 22, both of Nanticoke, will be charged at a later date, state police said. A 17-year-old juvenile, also of Nanticoke, will be charged.

Additional information was not immediately available.

1/22/2005

Devins found guilty of fatal DUI crash on Nanticoke span

By Edward Lewis , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A New York man was found guilty by a Luzerne County jury Friday of crashing his vehicle while driving drunk.

That accident in Nanticoke more than a year ago killed his wife and a 19-year-old woman.

Eugene William Devins, 42, of Saranac, was convicted of two counts each of homicide by vehicle while driving under the influence, homicide by vehicle, and driving under the influence, one count of aggravated assault while driving under the influence and several traffic violations.

The jury deliberated for three hours, 30 minutes before reaching the verdict following three days of testimony before Judge Thomas F. Burke Jr.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Michael T. Vough said Devins' blood alcohol level was probably higher than 0.136 percent that was recorded an hour after the crash on Oct. 30, 2003.

Devins was driving his 2003 Honda at a high rate of speed across the West Nanticoke-Nanticoke Bridge when he lost control and crashed into a 1994 Jeep Cherokee, operated by Edward Stavetski, on Lower Broadway Street.

Devins' wife, Verna, 37, and Donna Roushey, Nanticoke, died in the crash. They were passengers in the rear seat of Devins' vehicle.

Devins testified he was looking at his front seat passenger, David Romanowski, as he approached an angle on the bridge. When he looked back to the roadway, Devins said he was blinded by an oncoming vehicle's high beams and lost control when he applied his brakes.

State Trooper Todd Norton, an accident reconstructionist, estimated Devins was driving 59 mph when he lost control.

The posted speed limit in the area is 25 mph.

Vough and Devins' defense lawyer, William C. Urbanski, used the same argument but in different styles during their closing statements to the jury.

Both attorneys said Devins had driven over the bridge a few times without incident.

However, Urbanski said speed and the angle of the bridge caused the accident, not alcohol.

"There was nothing he could have done, alcohol or no alcohol," Urbanski said. "At 59 miles per hour, anyone traveling at that speed would have had the same result."

"He drove over that bridge twice before, once sober and once drunk," Vough said. "When he was stone sober, he didn't kill anybody."

Prosecutors claimed Devins and his wife consumed alcohol at the Nanticoke American Legion the night of Oct. 29, 2003.

Devins and his wife left the legion the next day shortly before 12:30 a.m. and traveled two miles across the bridge to Romanowski's apartment on Poplar Street, West Nanticoke.

Urbanski said Devins, despite leaving the legion after consuming beer, managed to safely drive across the bridge and arrive at the Poplar Street address.

Romanowski and Roushey were dating and went with Devins and his wife to get food.

While driving across the bridge shortly before 1 a.m., Devins lost control and struck Stavetski's Jeep.

Stavetski was traveling west on Lower Broadway Street and was just about to cross over the bridge when the crash

occurred. He broke a hand and foot and damaged ligaments in his left leg.

Romanowski broke a bone in his neck and injured his face.

Judge Burke set Devins' bail at \$150,000 straight. Devins was sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility. He had been free on his own recognizance.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Thursday, April 7, at 9:15 a.m.

1/21/2005

Closing arguments today in fatal crash trial

By Edward Lewis , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A Luzerne County jury will hear closing arguments Friday morning in the trial of Eugene William Devins, 42. Devins is charged in a vehicular accident that killed his wife and a 19-year-old woman more than a year ago in Nanticoke.

Prosecutors alleged Devins had a blood alcohol content of 0.136 percent when he lost control of his 2003 Honda and crashed into a 1994 Jeep Cherokee on Lower Broadway Street on Oct. 30, 2003.

Devins' wife, Verna, 37, and Donna Roushey, Nanticoke, were killed in the crash. They were passengers in the rear seat of Devins' vehicle.

Devins of Saranac, N.Y., and his wife consumed several alcoholic drinks at the American Legion in Nanticoke on Oct. 29, 2003. They left the legion at about midnight and arrived at the West Nanticoke residence of David Romanowski on Poplar Street.

Romanowski was a nephew of Mrs. Devins.

Romanowski and Roushey were dating and went with Devins and his wife to get food.

While driving across the West Nanticoke-Nanticoke Bridge at a high rate of speed, Devins lost control of his vehicle and crashed into the Jeep driven by Edward Stavetski.

Upon questioning by Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Michael T. Vough on Thursday, Nanticoke police Det. William A. Shultz testified that the roadway the night of the crash was dry.

However, Devins' lawyer, William C. Urbanski, pointed to an aerial photograph taken by the state police Forensic Services Unit that showed a puddle of water near the crash site that could have affected driving conditions.

Det. Shultz said the puddle of water was off the berm of the roadway and had no impact to drivers traveling on Lower Broadway Street.

Dr. Jack Snyder, a toxicology expert from Washington, D.C., who testified for the prosecution, said alcohol was a contributing factor to the crash. He said a person with a BAC level of 0.136 percent would be impaired to drive a vehicle.

On cross-examination by Urbanski, Dr. Snyder said he had no knowledge of Devins' driving habits or alcohol consumption.

Urbanski claimed Devins lost control while being forced to steer his vehicle with the angle of the bridge.

The bridge is in two sections: A section spans the Susquehanna River, and the other section angles over ground.

Devins' trial began Tuesday before Judge Thomas F. Burke Jr., who scheduled closing arguments by Vough and Urbanski to begin at 9:30 a.m.

1/21/2005

Man Arrested on Assault charges

Kevin Karl Atkinson was arrested on assault charges after he bit his girlfriend and slammed her head on a steering wheel at her home on Shea Street on Tuesday morning, police said.

Atkinson, 36, of Sharpe Street, Alden, Newport Township, has been living with his girlfriend, Christina Lamoreaux, since September, police said.

According to court papers:

At 3:30 a.m. Tuesday, Atkinson stole Lamoreaux's vehicle and she reported the theft to police.

Atkinson returned at her residence at 4 a.m. and Lamoreaux entered the vehicle and attempted to leave, police said.

Police said Atkinson became angry and started banging her head off the steering wheel of the vehicle.

When Lamoreaux arrived at the police station at 11:30 a.m., she had a bite mark on her left hand that was bleeding, bumps on the back of her head and a swollen bruise on her forehead, police said.

She told police all of the injuries were caused during the fight with Atkinson.

Atkinson is charged with simple assault, harassment and stalking. He was taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

1/20/2005

Passenger: Driver in fatal crash ignored warnings

The trial of Eugene Devins in a crash that left two people dead continues in county court.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

A drunken Eugene Devins ignored pleas by his passengers to slow his speeding vehicle as it neared a sharp curve off the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke bridge in 2003, witnesses said.

Instead, the 42-year-old from New York accelerated to nearly 90 mph as the vehicle approached the Nanticoke side of the bridge, passenger David Romanowski testified Wednesday.

Romanowski's fiancée, 19-year-old Donna Roushey, grabbed his arm as Romanowski told Devins he'd never make the turn at that speed, the passenger said.

It was too late. The vehicle spun out of control and struck another vehicle, killing two of Devins' passengers, Roushey and Romanowski's aunt, 37-year-old Verna Devins.

Romanowski blacked out, but awoke to see the other passengers, including his unconscious fiancée and aunt, who was also the driver's wife.

"I looked at my aunt ... she was dead," Romanowski said, bringing tears to some family members.

Romanowski's statements came during the second day of testimony at Devins' trial in Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas on two counts of homicide by motor vehicle while driving under the influence and other charges.

Nanticoke police and Luzerne County prosecutors said Devins had a blood-alcohol level of 0.136 percent when his vehicle spun out of control at 59 mph after it crossed the bridge early Oct. 30, 2003.

Wednesday's testimony from Romanowski, 22, and Melissa Dillon, Verna Devins' daughter, at times supported the prosecution and the defense.

Under questioning from Assistant District Attorney Mike Vough, Romanowski and Dillon, who was tending bar at the American Legion in Nanticoke where Devins drank before the collision, said they both knew Devins had beer prior to the wreck.

He had four mugs of beer during his three hours at the bar, Dillon, 22, said.

But Devins' attorney, William Urbanski, established that Devins showed no signs of intoxication and appeared capable of driving safely.

Until Devins sped across the bridge, he had no difficulties driving, Romanowski said.

Dillon said she had no reservations about Devins' ability to drive as she said goodbye to Devins and her mother when they left the bar shortly after midnight Oct. 30, 2003.

"Was that the last time you saw your mother?" Vough asked Dillon.

"Yeah," she said. "I gave her a kiss goodbye."

Urbanski has argued Devins wrecked his vehicle because of speed and the contour of the road, not because of alcohol.

Testimony will continue before Judge Thomas Burke. Vough is expected to call a witness to explain to tell jurors how a blood-alcohol level of 0.136 percent hampers the ability to drive.

1/20/2005

Officer says he smelled booze at accident scene

By Edward Lewis , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Nanticoke police Officer Lee Makowski testified Wednesday he detected an odor of alcohol on the breath of Eugene William Devins, 42, upon his arrival to the scene of a two-vehicle crash.

Devins' wife and a 19-year-old woman were killed in that collision in October 2003.

Devins of Saranac, N.Y., is on trial before a Luzerne County jury on charges of two counts each of homicide by vehicle while under the influence, homicide by vehicle, DUI, a single count of aggravated assault and several vehicle code violations.

Prosecutors alleged Devins had a blood alcohol content level of 0.136 percent when he crashed head on with a Jeep Cherokee on Lower Broadway Street, Nanticoke, on Oct. 30, 2003.

Devins' wife, Verna, 37, and Donna Roushey, 19, Nanticoke, were killed. They were passengers in the rear seat of Devins' vehicle.

Officer Makowski testified he was helping Edward Stavetski, who was injured and trapped inside his Jeep, when he was summoned by paramedics to remove Devins from the area.

Devins was interfering with paramedics who were tending to Verna Devins and Roushey, according to the affidavit of probable cause.

Officer Makowski said that when Devins was escorted from the area, he detected an odor of alcohol on his breath. Officer Makowski said Devins had told him that while he was driving across the West Nanticoke-Nanticoke Bridge, he looked at his front passenger, David Romanowski.

When Devins looked back at the road, he told Officer Makowski he was blinded by headlights of an oncoming vehicle, applied his brakes and lost control of his vehicle.

Under cross-examination by Attorney William C. Urbanski, Officer Makowski said Devins was not administered a field sobriety test at the scene.

Urbanski claimed the bridge, which is in two sections, caused Devins to lose control of his vehicle. A section crosses over the Susquehanna River and the other section is angled over ground.

Devins lost control while being forced to steer his vehicle with the angle of the bridge, Urbanski claimed.

Testimony ended before noon when Judge Thomas F. Burke Jr. excused the jury for the day due to slippery road conditions.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Michael T. Vough will continue to present his case Thursday morning.

1/19/2005

Unsafe bridge, not alcohol, caused deaths, says lawyer

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

A man accused of being drunk when he killed two people in a collision would have wrecked his vehicle even if he had not been drinking, the man's attorney said.

The attorney said his client, Eugene Devins, could not avoid the 2003 wreck just off the Nanticoke/West Nanticoke bridge because the bridge is like an "airport runway" with a sharp curve at the end.

"We will show there's absolutely nothing Gene could have done, alcohol or no alcohol in his system, to prevent this collision from happening," attorney William Urbanski told a jury Tuesday.

Urbanski made the plea to jurors during his opening statements at the start of Devins' trial on two counts of homicide by motor vehicle while driving under the influence and other charges. A conviction of the two homicide charges would result in a mandatory sentence of at least six to 12 years in prison.

Police said Devins, 42, of Saranac, N.Y., was drunk Oct. 30, 2003, when he lost control of his car and struck a Jeep driven by Edward Stavetski on Lower Broadway, near the bridge.

Two passengers in Devins' car - his wife, 37-year-old Verna Devins, and friend, 19-year-old Donna Roushey, of Nanticoke - died in the crash. A third passenger, David Romanowski, of West Nanticoke, survived. Stavetski was injured.

Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Mike Vough told jurors testimony from police and experts will show Devins, his wife, and Romanowski were drinking at the Nanticoke American Legion before traveling across the bridge to pick up Roushey.

They left the home and were traveling back across the bridge when Devins, with a blood-alcohol level of 0.136 percent, accelerated the vehicle to at least 59 mph. That's when he lost control of the vehicle on a curve at the end of the bridge before striking Stavetski's vehicle.

Urbanski said he will not contest most of the prosecution's evidence, but he will show alcohol did not cause the wreck, making Devins not guilty of the charges.

Testimony will continue before Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Thomas Burke.

1/3/2005

Nanticoke man gets stabbed

Police look for the two assailants who attacked Jason Kotch behind a store.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

A 25-year-old city man suffered two stab wounds while trying to fight off two men who robbed him Friday night, police said.

City police said two men attacked Jason Kotch in an alley behind a convenience store at 61 E. Main St. around 7:30 p.m. Kotch suffered two slash wounds to his left forearm and upper arm.

He was transported to Wilkes-Barre Mercy Hospital where he was treated and released.

According to police:

Once the men attacked Kotch, he tried fighting them. One of the men had a pocket knife and slashed Kotch. Kotch was robbed of \$40, a silver necklace and a black and green Philadelphia Eagles jacket. Kotch ran into a nearby Uni-Mart. One of the suspects followed him, but was scared off. Kotch then exited the Uni-Mart and began chasing the suspect in the alley towards Walnut Street. The suspects are described as white males in their late teens or early 20s, 5 feet 11 inches tall, and thin. Anyone who witnessed the attack is asked to call police at 735-2200. Detective Bill Schultz and officers Leonard Nardozzo and Brian Kata are investigating.

Jan 3, 2005

Nanticoke Woman faces shoplifting charges

A Nanticoke woman was arrested Thursday after she tried to steal \$34 in merchandise from a grocery store and \$90 in seafood from another store, police said.

At about 8 p.m. police were called to Wegmans on Highland Park Boulevard, where Karen Warakomski, 54, tried to leave the store with the merchandise, police said.

Police searched Warakomski's car and said they found \$90 in lobster and shrimp she took from the nearby Sam's Club on Wilkes-Barre Township Boulevard.

Charges of retail theft and receiving stolen property will be filed against her.

2004

Dec. 20, 2004

Nanticoke Woman fatally injured in accident

By Robert Kalinowski , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

An elderly woman was pronounced dead at the scene of a two-vehicle accident in Nanticoke on Saturday evening, Nanticoke police said.

Authorities have identified the victim, reportedly a Nanticoke resident in her 70s, but are not releasing her name until family members are notified.

The crash occurred just after 6 p.m. near Broadway Street and Access Road, which leads to the Honey Pot section of the city, police said.

The woman was a passenger in a Ford Crown Victoria that was apparently crossing Broadway Street to get on to Access Road when it was struck by a Jeep Cherokee traveling on Broadway Street toward the downtown, police said Broadway Street has a posted speed limit of 35 mph.

Luzerne County Deputy Coroner Earl Lohman pronounced the woman dead at the scene at 6:35 p.m.

The driver of the Crown Victoria was airlifted from the scene and the other driver was taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. Police did not identify either driver. Their conditions were not known Sunday night.

Luzerne County Chief Deputy Coroner William Lisman said an autopsy would be performed on the woman today.

Any witnesses to the accident are asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

Dec. 4, 2004

Nanticoke man pleads guilty to robbery

A 21-year-old Nanticoke man pleaded guilty in Luzerne County Court for his role in a robbery in September.

Jason Demski, South Hanover Street, pleaded guilty to a single count of robbery before Judge Michael Toole.

Demski is scheduled to be sentenced Tuesday, Feb. 8, at 9 a.m.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Eric Karvaski was walking in the area of Washington and South Hanover Streets, Nanticoke, on Sept. 5 when he was approached by Jason Demski, Gary Demski, 23, and Christopher Powell 20, who demanded money.

Karvaski said he had no money and walked behind a church where the three assaulted him.

Nanticoke police said \$70 was taken from Karvaski's pants pocket.

Karvaski suffered minor injuries.

Gary Demski, South Hanover Street, was charged with simple assault, and Powell, West Union Street, Nanticoke, was charged with robbery. Their cases have not been disposed.

Dec. 1, 2004

Boy, 13, burned after explosion

A 13-year-old Grant Street boy was burned Tuesday afternoon when a bottle containing a flammable liquid exploded, police said.

Officer Kevin Grevera said the boy, whom he would not identify, was apparently playing with the bottle, which he described as a "Molotov cocktail," when it exploded at about 3:48 p.m. in a wooded area off West Field Street. The boy was burned over the lower part of his body. Grevera did not know the extent of the burns. He said the boy was flown by helicopter to a burn center. It could not be determined Tuesday evening which hospital received the boy. Grevera said it was not clear what type of liquid was in the bottle. He said the boy was in a lot of pain and could not answer many questions. He said he is attempting to interview others who might have been with the boy to gather more information.

"There is no indication there was foul play. It seemed like he was playing with it and it was accidental."

Nov. 30, 2004

11/30/2004

Prosecutors moving forward with homicide charges against Arnold

Luzerne County prosecutors can go forward with their case against Mark C. Arnold, 37, accused of killing a 20-year-old Nanticoke man in May.

Judge Hugh Mundy partially denied a request by Arnold's defense lawyers, Frank and Joseph Nocito, to dismiss both first- and second-degree murder charges against their client.

The Nocitos claimed during a hearing held Nov. 19 that prosecutors failed to establish a sufficient case at a preliminary hearing in August that Arnold intentionally, willingly and deliberately caused the death of Nicholas Havard in Newport Township on May 5.

Assistant district attorneys Greg Fellerman and Jennifer Hadley submitted the transcript of the preliminary hearing to support their case.

Judge Mundy opined Monday that prosecutors can proceed their case accusing Arnold of first-degree murder.

However, Judge Mundy dismissed the charge of second-degree murder.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Arnold learned that several kids were looking for his son because of a previous altercation.

Arnold and several members of his family followed three cars that drove slowly past their home on Center Street, Wanamie, Newport Township.

The cars stopped on Old Newport Street where the kids yelled at Arnold.

Arnold got out of his vehicle and engaged in a confrontation with the group when he allegedly pulled a gun from his pants and shot Havard.

Arnold allegedly told authorities he only wanted to scare the kids.

Authorities found a .22 caliber handgun 200 yards from where the shooting occurred.

Arnold remains at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail on charges of first-degree criminal homicide and firearms not to be carried without a license.

The Nocitos could not be reached for comment.

Nov. 21, 2004

Lawyers seek dismissal of murder charges

By Edward Lewis , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Luzerne County Judge Hugh Mundy will soon decide whether to dismiss criminal homicide charges against Mark C. Arnold.

Mundy said he will issue a decision Monday, Nov. 29. Arnold's criminal defense lawyers, Frank and Joseph Nocito, filed the request for dismissal of charges

Arnold, 37, is accused of killing Nicholas Havard, 20, following an argument on Old Newport Street, Newport Township, May 5.

Joseph Nocito told Judge Mundy during a brief hearing Friday that prosecutors failed to establish a sufficient case at the preliminary hearing July 20 before District Justice Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

Joseph Nocito said there was no evidence that Arnold intentionally, willingly or deliberately caused Havard's death.

"In order to be convicted of first-degree criminal homicide, the killing had to be done with malice and was willingly and deliberately of criminal behavior," Joseph Nocito said. "They can't prove that at trial."

Assistant district attorneys Greg Fellerman and Jennifer Hadley submitted the transcript of the preliminary hearing to support their case.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Arnold learned that several kids were looking for his son because of a previous altercation.

Arnold and several members of his family followed three cars that drove slowly past their home on Center Street, Wanamie, Newport Township.

The cars stopped on Old Newport Street where the kids began yelling at Arnold.

Arnold got out of his vehicle and engaged in a confrontation with the group when he allegedly pulled a gun from his pants and shot Havard.

Arnold told authorities he only wanted to scare the kids.

Authorities found the .22 caliber handgun 200 yards from where the shooting occurred.

He remains at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail on charges of criminal homicide and firearms not to be carried without a license.

Nov. 20, 2004

A bomb threat forced the American Body Company on West Union Street to close Friday afternoon.

"Someone called from a pay phone around noon stating their was a pipe bomb in the building," said Detective Bill Schultz. "Everything appears to be OK now."

Nitro, a bomb-smelling dog, and Assistant Police Chief of the Veteran's Affairs Hospital Kevin Martin investigated the building at 375 W. Union St.

"After almost three hours, we found nothing," Martin said petting the 5-year-old black Labrador retriever.

The company, which was once the Phoenix Manufacturing Inc., employees about 75 people.

Nov. 6, 2004

Two charged in purse snatchings in parking lots

By TERRIE MORGAN-BESECKER tmorgan@leader.net

Police say a Wilkes-Barre man and an accomplice committed two purse snatchings in Nanticoke and Edwardsville during a several hour period on Thursday to support a drug habit.

Gary Sloat of Loomis Street was charged Thursday with robbery and criminal conspiracy in connection with a purse snatching in the parking lot of the Weis Market in Nanticoke at about 7:10 p.m. Thursday.

Nanticoke police said Sloat grabbed the purse from a shopping cart, then fought off the victim as he jumped into a car driven by Kimberly Branas Latorre, 31, of Sugar Run. Latorre is expected to be charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, said Detective William Shultz.

Edwardsville police said they also expect to charge Sloat and Latorre with a purse snatching that occurred 4 p.m. Thursday in the parking lot of the Price Chopper supermarket.

Sloat, Latorre and a third person, Jeremy Adams, no address available, were apprehended at about 7:40 p.m. Thursday after a Wilkes-Barre Township police officer saw them in a minivan that fit the description of the vehicle involved in the Nanticoke and Edwardsville robberies.

Patrolman Tim McCann spotted the car in the parking lot of Sam's Club. The vehicle, a Ford Windstar, had been reported stolen from Plains Township on Wednesday.

According to an arrest affidavit in the Nanticoke robbery, Sloat admitted he stole a purse from a woman in Edwardsville and that he, Latorre and Adams used money from that theft to buy crack cocaine. Afterward they wanted more crack and traveled to Nanticoke, where he stole the purse at Weis Market.

Sloat was arraigned Friday morning at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility by District Justice Daniel O'Donnell. He was lodged for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Latorre is charged with receiving stolen property and other offenses in connection with the stolen vehicle. She is lodged in the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail.

It was unclear Friday if any charges have been filed against Adams.

Oct. 26, 2004

Nanticoke man charged in chain reaction accident

A Nanticoke man faces a string of charges, including driving too fast, after he allegedly caused a three-vehicle collision on the West Nanticoke Bridge, Plymouth Township, on Monday, state police at Wyoming said.

State police said two cars which were traveling on the bridge towards state Route 11 were stopped for traffic when a 1980 Ford F-150 pick-up truck, driven by Eric Kravaski, 22, skidded approximately 30 feet and struck the vehicle in front of it.

That vehicle then struck the car in front of it, forcing it into a guardrail, state police said.

The first vehicle hit was occupied by Bernard Panasiewicz, 62, of West Nanticoke, who was wearing a seat belt, and Jacob Mullen, 5, who was in a car seat. Neither were injured, state police said.

The vehicle, a Lincoln Towncar, sustained moderate front damage and minor damage to the rear, state police said. The car which struck the guardrail was driven by Cheryl Addison, 45, who was not wearing a seatbelt. The vehicle sustained minor rear-end damage and was towed from the scene.

Addison suffered a minor injury and was taken to Mercy Hospital, Wilkes-Barre, via Plymouth Township ambulance, state police said.

Kravaski, who was wearing a seatbelt, also suffered a minor injury in the crash and was taken to Mercy Hospital as well.

His truck sustained minor front-end damage and was towed.

He faces charges of driving without a license, driving without insurance, driving an unregistered vehicle, invalid inspection and speeding, state police said.

The incident occurred at 5:30 p.m. and traffic was blocked for approximately an hour.

Assisting state police at the scene were Plymouth Township Fire Department and Nanticoke police.

Oct. 26, 2004

A 20-year-old Nanticoke woman was injured when she crashed her car at about 6:30 p.m. Sunday on Main Road at the border of Newport and Conyngham townships, according to state police at Shickshinny.

Tara Moore was traveling west on state Route 3004 in her Jeep Cherokee when she apparently missed a curve in the road and the vehicle traveled up an embankment, struck a rock and spun, rolled and slid back across the road before finally coming to rest on the driver's side, according to police reports.

Moore was flown to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. It is not known if she was wearing a seat belt. Moore was released Monday, according to a Geisinger spokesperson.

Oct. 24, 2004

Information on hit-and-run

Police are seeking information on a hit-and-run on East Main Street near Lacey's bar early Saturday morning.

The suspect vehicle is "possibly red" and damaged on the passenger side front end. It was traveling west on East Main Street when it hit a parked white vehicle and pushed it about 20 to 30 feet into a fire hydrant. Anyone with information should call officer Guydosh at 735-2200. Callers can remain anonymous.

October 13, 2004

Man admits to burglarizing more than dozen area homes

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

Three pieces of jewelry and a pair of sneakers help police track down a suspect in more than a dozen burglaries in several communities.

On Tuesday, the 23-year-old suspect, Thomas Blaine, admitted to sneaking into homes and stealing jewelry, electronics and other items valued at more than \$32,600.

Blaine, formerly of Nanticoke and living in Shawanese, pleaded guilty to more than 20 counts of burglary, theft, and receiving stolen property in numerous cases. Additional charges were dropped.

The charges, according to arrest papers, stem from a series of break-ins investigated by state police in late 2003 and early 2004 at homes in Bear Creek, Plymouth, and Buck townships, and Thornhurst in Lackawanna County.

Arrest papers say:

State Trooper Stephen Turinski recovered a gold bracelet, necklace and box chain from Rainbow Jewelers in Kingston on Jan. 7. He later learned the items were sold to Rainbow Jewelers on Dec. 31 by Blaine and stolen in a previous burglary.

Eight days later, police went to an Apollo Circle residence where Blaine was living with his girlfriend. He was arrested, arraigned on a receiving stolen property charge and taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

There, police took Blaine's sneakers, which had a distinct pattern. The pattern was found at numerous burglaries.

Police also searched Blaine's residence and vehicle and found numerous items, including jewelry and digital cameras.

Through that evidence, they determined Blaine was responsible for at least 13 burglaries.

Police later drove Blaine around to let him identify the homes he burglarized and what items he stole.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Senior Judge Gifford Cappellini is scheduled to sentence Blaine at 9:30 a.m.

Nov. 10.

October 13, 2004

W-B, Kingston, Nanticoke investigate drugstore burglaries

By KEVIN OWEN KEARNEY-kkearney@leader.net

The investigations into a string of burglaries at area pharmacies continued Tuesday, and the police departments involved would not publicly confirm if the incidents were related.

Painkillers, antidepressants and money were taken in the burglaries, which happened during the overnight hours of Friday and Saturday, according to police and pharmacy owners.

Targeted were the Medicine Shoppe pharmacies in Nanticoke and Wilkes-Barre, and Cook's Pharmacy in Kingston. Nothing was stolen from Cook's because an alarm sounded and frightened the burglar or burglars away, owner Jim Gaudino said Tuesday.

In Wilkes-Barre, the burglary at the Medicine Shoppe at 395 S. Main St. was reported shortly before 9 a.m. Saturday. Access to the building was gained through forced entry. Stolen were an unknown amount of OxyContin, Oxycodone, Alprazolam and Hydrocodone and cash, city police said.

In Nanticoke, the burglary occurred at the Medicine Shoppe at 69 N. Market St. Police said the store's alarm system was disabled and the front door was pried open. Stolen were an undisclosed amount of money and an unknown amount of OxyContin, Xanax and Percocet.

In Kingston, someone pried open the front door at Cook's, on Wyoming Avenue, with a crowbar, but went away empty handed.

"They were able to get through to the pharmacy, but must have been scared off by the alarm," Gaudino said. "I'm just glad it went off when it did."

Kingston police would not release any information Tuesday night.

Anyone with information on the cases is urged to call: Wilkes-Barre police at 826-8106; Kingston police at 288-3674; or Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

October 13, 2004

Man in trouble for removing monitoring ankle bracelet

By Edward Lewis, Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A 29-year old Nanticoke man was re-sentenced in Luzerne County Court Tuesday for removing an ankle bracelet the same day he was sentenced to home confinement for DUI.

James Novis, last known address 116 Christian St., was sentenced by Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. on April 26 to 30 days minimum to 12-months' maximum for a second DUI offense.

Novis was permitted to serve his sentence under house arrest with electronic monitoring.

However, Novis was accused of leaving his residence at 11:36 p.m. and returning the next day at 4:36 a.m. He was also accused of removing the bracelet from his ankle at 8:17 a.m. on April 27.

Novis appeared before Judge Olszewski on charges he violated his parole.

"Did you think you weren't going to get caught," Judge Olszewski said to Novis.

"I wasn't thinking," Novis said.

"You weren't thinking," Judge Olszewski said.

Novis said he was under the influence of heroin when he left his residence and removed the ankle bracelet.

"Oh, you were high," Judge Olszewski said. "Where did you go? Did you think Luzerne County was going to forget about you?"

"Technically, you can be charged with escape," Judge Olszewski noted.

Judge Olszewski re-sentenced Novis to 90-days' minimum to 12-months' maximum at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility. He was given credit for 70 days time served and was granted immediate parole upon serving the minimum sentence.

Novis was also ordered to continue drug and alcohol counseling, undergo random drug testing twice a week at his own expense, perform 50 hours of community service and obtain a full time job within seven days of his release.

Novis was arrested Feb. 21 by Hanover police after he was observed driving a Jeep Liberty carelessly on South Main Street and St. Mary's Road.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Novis admitted he drank six beers at a party and was on his way home. He failed several field sobriety tests and refused to submit to a blood alcohol content test.

A breath test revealed a BAC greater than 0.10 percent, according to the affidavit.

The legal limit in Pennsylvania is 0.08 percent.

October 12, 2004

Burglaries have this pharmacist rethinking security

By Robert Kalinowski , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer 10/12/2004

Tony Dougalas has operated the Medicine Shoppe in Nanticoke for 22 years.

The pharmacist of 45 years said his store, located in the heart of the city's downtown, has never once had a problem. That all changed early Saturday morning.

Some time after midnight, the 72-year-old's store was broken in to and thousands of dollars worth of powerful prescriptions drugs were stolen.

The sophisticated crooks cut the business phone line in the back of the store and then disabled the alarm.

They then ran around to front of the store, pried open the door, entered the pharmacy, and headed right for the most powerful of the prescribed medicines, fleeing with an undetermined amount of OxyContin, Percocet, Loricet, Vicodin, Xanax and Valium.

"They were definitely professionals. They knew how to get in and out quick," Dougalas said.

Dougalas learned he wasn't the only victim, as Medicine Shoppes in Wilkes-Barre and Exeter were also burglarized during the same time period, as was Cook's Pharmacy in Kingston.

"To take the chance to be out at the front door when cars might have been going by - that's really desperate," he said.

"They do it because people who do a burglary can sell it (drugs) at a phenomenal price," he said.

Douglas said the crooks basically wiped his store clean of the above-mentioned drugs, which left him unable to fill some prescriptions needed by customers. He said it also cost him hundreds of dollars to get the phone line, alarm system and door repaired.

He knows his losses are in the thousands, and has to wait for the wholesalers of the drugs to get back to him before he could even make an estimate in terms of dollars.

However, he said he is just happy no employees or customers got hurt.

Dougalas said this chain of robberies makes it evident that pharmacies have to change their method of operations with more intense security, including a back-up alarm system and cameras.

"We've been seeing a problem about one year after OxyContin was marketed," he said.

OxyContin was what an armed bandit demanded in a robbery at Spotanski's Pharmacy, Nanticoke, on Thursday, just two days before the recent string of heists.

"It's hard when they are addicted. They do dangerous things," Dougalas said.

Aside from getting in serious trouble, Dougalas said those hooked on these drugs are risking their own life.

"It could be very dangerous, especially when mixed with alcohol. It could cause death, very dramatically and very quickly," he said.

Anyone with information about the robbery is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

October 9, 2004

Salvadore Cassandro, 19, formerly of Nanticoke, was sentenced Friday to five years probation for his role in vandalizing about 60 vehicles.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joseph Augello sentenced Cassandro on a single count of criminal conspiracy.

Nanticoke police charged Cassandro, of Pittsburgh, and others in the Dec. 7 vandalism spree. Police said they shot out windows of at least 59 vehicles.

Augello also ordered Cassandro to pay part of the \$29,620 in restitution.

September 24, 2004

Mark Arnold, 37, of Newport Township, wants a county judge to dismiss certain murder charges filed against him.

The Wanamie man was charged with criminal homicide in connection with the May 5 shooting of Nicholas Havard in the township.

Police said Arnold shot Havard, 20, of Nanticoke, in the face with a pistol at point-blank range. The two had an altercation, with Arnold defending his son against allegations that he assaulted someone, police said.

Arnold on Thursday pleaded not guilty to the criminal homicide charge at his formal arraignment before Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Hugh Mundy.

Under a charge of criminal homicide, a defendant can be convicted of first-second-, or third-degree murder, or voluntary or involuntary manslaughter.

His attorneys, Frank and Joe Nocito, also on Thursday filed a request to have Arnold's first- and second-degree murder charges dismissed.

Those charges carry life jail sentences. Arnold, who is jailed without bail, would also be entitled to bail if the charges are dismissed.

The attorneys said prosecutors failed to present enough testimony at Arnold's preliminary hearing to establish they had sufficient evidence to prosecute Arnold.

Mundy scheduled a hearing for Oct. 29.

September 17, 2004

Manuel reports to prison today

By Edward Lewis Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A former Nanticoke doctor convicted two years ago of insurance fraud and dispensing controlled substances without prescriptions was ordered to start serving his prison sentence on Friday.

Dr. Laureano M. Manuel, Berwick, remained free on \$75,000 bail since February 2003 while he appealed his five to 10-year prison sentence imposed by Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr.

When the state Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal in an order filed Sept. 9, Judge Olszewski ordered Dr. Manuel to begin serving his sentence at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility by 9 a.m. Friday.

It is likely Dr. Manuel will be transported to a state correctional institution within 10 days.

"He'll be there," said Attorney Thomas Marsilio, who represents Dr. Manuel.

"An option we have is to ask the Supreme Court to reconsider," Marsilio said. "But that's not going to prevent him from starting his (prison) term."

If the state Supreme Court denies a second consideration, Marsilio said the next step would be filing an appeal with federal appellate courts.

Earlier this year, the state attorney general's office, who prosecuted Dr. Manuel, filed a petition seeking to revoke his bail when the state Superior Court upheld his prison sentence in January

Dr. Manuel was convicted by a Luzerne County jury on Sept. 11, 2002, of two counts each of Medicaid fraud and prescription of a controlled substance to a drug dependent person, and one count of prescription of a controlled substance not in accordance with treatment principles.

Prior to his conviction, Dr. Manuel was free on \$75,000 bail; however, Judge Olszewski imposed bail of \$150,000 after Dr. Manuel was convicted and was sent to LCCF.

Dr. Manuel appealed his higher bail to the Superior Court; the court reinstated the \$75,000 bail in February 2003.

Dr. Manuel was accused of selling and dispensing controlled substances without prescriptions.

He has also been named as a defendant in at least two civil lawsuits for causing the drug overdose deaths of two persons in March 2000 and June 2001, according to court records.

September 14, 2004

Murders among surprises in stats

By LANE FILLER-lfiller@leader.net

CRIME DATA

In two years, the murder rate in Luzerne County increased 150 percent.

In 2001, eight murders were reported in Luzerne County. In 2002, that number nearly doubled, to 15, and in 2003, 20 murders were reported.

And that's just one of the intriguing aspects of the Uniform Crime Report, released by the state last week.

But to understand the numbers, one must understand the stories behind them. Kingston Township, for instance, reported no murders in 2001 or 2002 but had five in 2003.

Has the town changed so much? Are gangland shootings now the norm?

Well, no. But in 2003, an investigation at the Kingston Township property where homicide suspect Hugo Selenski resided turned up five buried bodies. All are believed to have been murdered. Selenski has been charged in two of the deaths.

But even without the Kingston Township killings, the situation is daunting.

"We have 10 homicide cases pending now (including homicide by vehicle) and that is unheard of in Luzerne County,"

Luzerne County District Attorney David Lupas said. "From my perspective, there is a lot more serious, violent crime, and it is stretching our resources to the limit."

But some crime trends are simple, the numbers too big to be coincidence. Countywide, 64 arsons were reported in 2001, 91 in 2002 and 119 in 2003.

That's an increase of 86 percent, with no handy explanation in sight.

The biggest anomaly in the arson statistics is that while about 14 percent of crime countywide was committed in areas covered only by the state police in 2003, 64 percent of the arsons were reported in those same areas, but that trend has held true for years.

"We are seeing so much of it we now have an assistant DA who specializes in arson," Lupas said. "There have been outbreaks in Pittston, West Pittston, Plymouth Township, all over the place, and it's not for insurance, it's firebugs and volunteer firefighters, mostly."

Larceny, the fastest-growing crime in Luzerne County, accounted for 66 percent of all major crime reports last year. Larceny is theft that doesn't involve physical threat or injury, and doesn't include forcible entry. The county saw 2,131 such reports in 2001, 4,829 in 2002, 5,047 in 2003. Again, that's an increase of nearly 150 percent.

But there's one more crime category that's been on the rise, and local law enforcement officers will tell you it's the one that can predict everything else.

In 2001 there were 393 drug crimes reported in Luzerne County. By 2003, that number had almost exactly doubled, climbing to 737.

"We've become like a virgin market for drugs from Newark and Philadelphia," Nanticoke Detective Bill Shultz said.

"We're doing everything we possibly can, but we've lost two positions (from 14 to 12) in our department, which leaves us with fewer resources to deal with more problems."

Shultz has reason to wring his hands. Nanticoke for the last two years has been caught in a spiral of increasing crime, with major offenses (such as assault and burglary) up 45 percent and lesser crimes up 71 percent.

"We've seen a big increase in heroin in the last few years," Shultz said. "We do what we can, but it never seems to be enough. There are a lot of people coming in from other communities, and we have our hands full all the time. There is so much going on out there related to drugs that we can't even hope to touch except with the help of the DEA or the Attorney General's Office."

Shultz also said some crimes of late, particularly motor vehicle thefts and thefts from motor vehicles, have indicated a professionalism normally associated with organized theft rings.

"When you see people stealing stereos out of certain models or brands of car repeatedly, that seems to be the work of people who know what they're doing," Shultz said.

But there are bright spots, as well. Kingston (which did not report in the UCR in 2001) has seen major crimes decrease 32 percent from 2002 to 2003. Lesser crimes in the same period decreased 38 percent, and officers and citizens agree it's because of a strong combined effort between the police force and the populace.

"That's because of a good police department," acting Chief James Keiper said, chuckling. "We're making do with what we have, but we're patrolling all the time, we're seeing a lot more, and an active crime watch helps."

In Kingston, that crime watch is headed up by Anne Breha, who sent praise right back Keiper's way, saying, "Our department is very good right now. We don't have that many officers, but the ones we do have are excellent at their jobs."

Breha added that her group, which numbers about 20, could always use more help, and said Keiper and his men are very responsive to the crime watch's tips

Nick Pucino, who coordinates the crime watch in Nanticoke's Hanover section community, makes crime his concern every day, but he also knows it could be a lot worse, and thinks the police are doing the best they can.

"I tell people 'Thank God we don't live in Philadelphia,'" Pucino said. "We have crime in Nanticoke, there's crime everywhere, but you have to put it in the perspective that in other places, they have a lot more."

As it turns out, Pucino is right. Philadelphia County residents were four times more likely to be murdered or raped and six times more likely to have their car stolen than folks in Luzerne County in 2003.

But Luzerne County isn't behind the big city in every category. Folks here assaulted each other slightly more often than people in Philadelphia did last year.

September 12, 2004

Salvatore Cassandro, 19, formerly of Nanticoke, pleaded guilty Wednesday to his role in vandalizing at least 59 vehicles.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joseph Augello will sentence Cassandro on a single count of criminal

conspiracy at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 8. Additional charges were dropped.

Nanticoke police charged Cassandro, of Pittsburgh, and three others for their roles in the Dec. 7 vandalism spree. Police said they shot out windows of at least 59 vehicles, causing more than \$5,000 in damage.

August 24, 2004

Newport cop enters plea, apologizes

Part-time officer Jeffrey Zafia admits he harassed two youths at Nanticoke pizzeria.

By RON LIEBACK-rlieback@leader.net

A part-time Newport Township police officer pleaded guilty Monday to harassing two 15-year-olds at a pizzeria, then apologized to the teens.

"Sorry for what happened that day," officer Jeffrey Zafia, 39, of West Green Street, Nanticoke, said during the hearing that lasted about two minutes. "I really didn't mean it."

Police said Zafia entered Antonio's Pizza in Nanticoke on May 20 and approached the two boys before grabbing one of them, shaking the boy and threatening to beat him.

"(Zafia) said, 'I'm a ... cop. Don't (mess) with me,'" according to court papers. "He then said, 'I'll kick your ... ass if you keep looking out the window.'"

Zafia also faced a charge of public drunkenness, which was dismissed. He was ordered to pay a \$200 fine and court costs on a summary charge of harassment.

"I think it was the best way to go," said Nanticoke City Detective Sgt. William Shultz. "He is just going to have to take his lumps with the (township) commissioners."

Shultz said the grandparents of the teens were not pleased with the outcome of the case. He said the grandparents worry about what would have happened "if he (Zafia) had a gun and tragedy struck."

It was unclear Monday if Zafia's plea would impact his position with Newport Township. Shultz said Zafia had been removed from the township police schedule after he was charged.

"The bottom line comes down to the Newport Township commissioners," Shultz said. "If they want to reinstate him or throw him out the door, it is up to them."

Newport Township Police Chief Carl Smith did not return calls for comment Monday.

According to court papers, an intoxicated and off-duty Zafia entered Antonio's at about 10 p.m. on May 20.

One of the boys glanced at Zafia as he entered. Zafia approached the boy and asked him if he was all right before grabbing the boy by the shoulder and upper back area and "shaking him."

An Antonio's employee, Vincent Rodriguez, called police. Zafia left the scene before officers arrived, but Rodriguez recognized Zafia as the perpetrator, the papers state.

Shultz investigated the report and said the boys account appeared truthful. The Luzerne County District Attorney's Office approved the filing of the citations.

July. 31, 2004

Newport cop cited with harassment

Jeffrey Zafia is awaiting a hearing on accusations of being drunk and shaking a boy in a restaurant.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

A Newport Township police officer has been accused of being drunk and harassing two 15-year-old boys at a city pizzeria.

Nanticoke City Detective Sgt. William Shultz said the 39-year-old Jeffrey Zafia entered Antonio's Pizza on May 20 and approached the two boys before grabbing one of them, shaking the boy and threatening to beat him.

"(Zafia) said, 'I'm a ... cop. Don't (mess) with me,'" Shultz said. "He then said, 'I'll kick your ... ass if you keep looking out the window.'"

Zafia, of West Green Street in Nanticoke, was cited with summary offenses of public drunkenness and harassment. He pleaded not guilty and is awaiting a hearing.

Newport Township Chief Carl Smith said Zafia was a part-time police officer and has been removed from work pending an outcome of the charges.

According to Shultz:

An intoxicated and off-duty Zafia entered Antonio's at about 10 p.m.

One of the boys glanced at Zafia as he entered. Zafia approached the boy and asked him if he was all right before grabbing the boy by the shoulder and upper back area and "shaking him."

An Antonio's employee, Vincent Rodriguez, called police. Zafia left the scene before officers arrived but Rodriguez

recognized Zafia as the perpetrator.

Shultz investigated the report and said the boys appeared truthful. The Luzerne County District Attorney's Office approved the filing of the citations.

Zafia's not-guilty plea means he would have a hearing before District Justice Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke. But Whittaker also covers Newport Township cases, leading to the hearing being moved to District Justice Joseph Halesey's office in Hanover Township.

The citations call for Zafia to pay fines and court costs totaling \$437.50, if convicted.

Contacted at home Friday, Zafia said he did not want anything in the newspaper about the citations before hanging up.

July 25, 2004

Nanticoke man charged with smashing window

State Police at Shickshinny charged a Nanticoke man early Saturday morning for allegedly smashing out a window in a vehicle.

Police charged John Frank Mrus with criminal mischief after he allegedly broke the passenger side window of a vehicle owned by Nancy Spellman of Nanticoke at 1:30 a.m.

The incident occurred in a field off Smith Road, adjacent to Jesse Road, in Plymouth Township.

Trooper Thomas L. Appleman is the arresting officer.

July 22, 2004

Biker pleads guilty over rider's nudity

Joseph Gronka, 34, of Bloomsburg, pleaded guilty Tuesday to a summary offense of disorderly conduct for allowing a naked woman to ride on his motorcycle.

Gronka entered the plea in District Justice Donald Whittaker's office and paid \$277.50 in fines and court costs.

City police charged Gronka, a dentist, in connection with the June 12 incident.

Police said Gronka drove a naked Lisa Drozdowski up Prospect Street near Patriot Square. Police stopped the motorcycle on Orchard Street, where Drozdowski, 39, of West Noble Street in Nanticoke, propped her feet up on Gronka, further exposing herself, arrest papers said.

Drozdowski, a former Luzerne County employee, showed signs of intoxication and was taken into custody after being given her clothes, police said.

Once in a holding cell, she attempted to flush a pipe believed to be used for smoking crack or marijuana down a toilet, police said. Drozdowski also kicked an officer twice in the groin, police said.

She was charged with open lewdness, indecent exposure, public drunkenness, aggravated assault, simple assault, possession of drug paraphernalia and tampering with evidence.

July 21, 2004

Anger flies, tears flow at hearing

Shouts of 'murderer' ring as local man is sent to trial in May incident

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

Homicide suspect Mark Arnold was a few steps outside of a police cruiser being led to a hearing Tuesday when emotions started spilling over.

An Arnold friend urged the shackled suspect to keep his head held high. The fiance of the 20-year-old he's accused of killing sobbed as a friend shouted at Arnold.

"Murderer. Murderer," a woman shouted. "You shot an innocent kid for no reason."

The two factions, totaling more than 40 people, waited tensely outside District Justice Donald Whittaker's office in Nanticoke on Tuesday morning before Arnold's preliminary hearing on homicide charges.

They filed into court to hear Whittaker tell prosecutors they have enough evidence to take the 37-year-old Arnold to trial in Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas on the charges.

Arnold, of Center Street in Wanamie, Newport Township, is charged with homicide and a firearms violation in connection with the May 5 shooting of Nicholas Havard in a township parking lot.

Police said Arnold shot Havard, of Nanticoke, in the face with a pistol at point-blank range. The two had an altercation, with Arnold defending his son against allegations that he assaulted someone.

But the charges were vigorously disputed by Arnold's attorneys, Frank and Joe Nocito, who asked Whittaker to dismiss the first- and second-degree murder charges.

The attorneys said evidence showed Arnold never intended to shoot the gun.

Arnold, they argued, was defending himself and his son from a group of threatening individuals who carried baseball bats inside their vehicles.

The attorneys also noted that police said the gun "discharged," with no clear indication that Arnold meant to fire the weapon. Arnold has said he did not intend to shoot Havard.

The request to dismiss the charges came after Trooper Charles Prula and witness Luke Capie recounted the events leading up to the shooting.

According to their testimony:

Capie was assaulted by another man earlier May 5. That man and two others were in a blue vehicle that Capie and his friends thought might belong to the Arnolds.

Capie, Havard, and a group of friends took three vehicles to look for the vehicle, even though Capie was unsure if Arnold's son was involved in the assault.

They drove past Arnold's home and pulled into the parking lot near the home. Arnold, his wife and another man were in a vehicle and saw the group drive past Arnold's home.

The Arnold vehicle followed the group into the parking lot, near Savitsky's Edge bar.

There, Havard was out of the vehicle to switch seats when Arnold arrived and inquired who had a problem with his son. Arnold told the group his son had nothing to do with the assault, but an argument ensued with voices being raised and Arnold getting out of the vehicle.

Arnold kept screaming at Havard, who got into Arnold's face. But, without hesitation, Arnold raised the gun against Havard's cheek before the gun fired, Capie said. Arnold then left.

Under questioning from Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Greg Fellerman, Capie said Havard was unarmed and did not provoke the shooting.

The criminal homicide charge means prosecutors can seek a conviction on first-, second-, or third-degree murder, or voluntary or involuntary manslaughter.

The Nocitos only asked for the two most serious charges, first- and second-degree murder, to be dismissed. The attorneys said Havard was not shot while the shooter committed another felony, which constitutes second-degree murder.

And all other testimony, including Arnold's interview with police, show he did not intend for the weapon to fire. That shows prosecutors did not have the premeditation needed to show Arnold committed first-degree murder, Nocito argued.

But Fellerman said Arnold's actions clearly show prosecutors can try Arnold on all charges, including first-degree murder. Arnold, the prosecutor argued, followed the group, got out of a vehicle, and pointed a gun at Havard's face. That's enough to show a specific intent to kill, Fellerman said.

"Premeditation can be formed in split second," he said.

Whittaker sided with prosecutors, sending all charges to county court. Arnold was taken back to prison.

July 21, 2004

Victim's colors not tied to gangs, family says

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

The red bandana that hung around Nicholas Havard's neck when he was killed was just a way for him to display one of his favorite colors.

That's it.

It was not, his family stressed, a sign of the 20-year-old Havard being affiliated with a gang, like the "Bloods."

"Nicky's colors were red and black," Havard's tearful sister, Heather Kelly, said Tuesday.

Her comments came after some testimony during a preliminary hearing for Mark Arnold, who is charged with killing Havard, carried gang overtones.

The gang-related questions came when an Arnold attorney questioned a witness about the red bandanas he and Havard wore.

Red bandanas are often affiliated with the "Bloods" gang, but Havard's wearing of bandanas was no way a sign of being affiliated with a gang, his family said.

"I wear a camouflage bandana," said Havard's brother, Jason, a police officer. "Does that mean I'm in a militia?"

The family also pointed out how Havard's mother wore red and black clothing to pay tribute to her son at Arnold's hearing.

Police said Arnold shot Havard in the face with a pistol at point-blank range on May 5. The shooting occurred after an argument ensued between Arnold and Havard, who was with a group of people.

Arnold's attorneys suggested their client might have pulled the gun after an argument to defend himself from the group of threatening hoodlums carrying baseball bats in their vehicles.

The attorneys did that, in part, by questioning, Luke Capie, an eyewitness and friend of Havard.

Capie fielded questions from attorney Frank Nocito, who asked whether Capie, during the May 5 argument, heard any of his friends yell "shoot the f----" or "you don't know who you're messing with."

Capie denied hearing any such comments. He also denied hearing anyone make references to the "Bloods" or "Crips" gangs.

The witness said he was wearing a red bandana to clot the blood he suffered in an earlier assault. Havard often wore a red bandana.

The challenge didn't weigh well with Havard's family.

"He was a good boy," Havard's father, David, said, holding a picture of his son. "He didn't deserve what happened."

The family said Havard's death was untimely and undeserving. And for Arnold trying to infer that Havard provoked the shooting, the family hopes he suffers the consequences of his actions, they said.

"He was not a bad kid," Kelly said. "That son of a bitch will pay in the end."

"I hope they nail him," David Havard said.

Arnold's supporters, most of them wearing blue shirts marketing the construction company of Arnold's wife, refused to comment on the issue.

July 21, 2004

Woman charged in robbery, stabbings

By Debby Higgins and Heidi E. Ruckno, Citizens' Voice Staff Writers

District Justice William Amesbury, Wilkes-Barre, arraigned Tanya Marie Faux, 31, of 19 Arch St., Edwardsville, on charges of robbery, aggravated assault and reckless endangerment.

Faux, also known as Tanya Marie Peck, was charged with one count of robbery, four counts of aggravated assault and two counts of reckless endangerment. She was sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility late Tuesday night.

Amesbury set bail at \$35,000, straight cash. However, Edwardsville police officers informed him that Luzerne County Adult Probation and Parole ordered Faux to be detained automatically as a repeat parole violator if she were suspected of any criminal activity.

According to police, Faux allegedly walked into the Price Chopper Supermarket at the West Side Mall, Edwardsville, around 3:30 a.m. Tuesday, brandishing a knife.

Faux is suspected of approaching clerk Donna Zikowski and demanding money. When Zikowski refused, Faux allegedly stabbed her arms and hand area then attempted to flee out of the store, borough Police Chief Michael Slusark said.

Ludek Rysavy, an employee of a company apparently contracted to provide cleaning services, tackled Faux and was promptly stabbed four times in the upper right arm, wrist and hips. Faux escaped and left the area in a maroon or brownish-colored Chevrolet with a missing left rear hubcap.

Both victims were treated at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, Plains Township, and released later Tuesday morning, the police chief said.

Another robbery occurred in Nanticoke after the Edwardsville robbery at approximately 5 a.m.

Nanticoke City Police Detective William Shultz said a white female, approximately 5 feet 4 inches tall with brownish-blond hair and wearing dark shorts and a black hooded sweatshirt, entered the UniMart, 61 E. Main St., brandished a knife and demanded money.

According to Det. Shultz, the clerk responded with "(expletive) you." The suspect then reached across the counter and grabbed several Pennsylvania lottery tickets.

"The clerk then reached under the counter and pulled out a hammer that she then used to hit the suspect on the arm.

Both the suspect and the lady behind the counter were pretty gutsy," the detective said.

Det. Shultz said the clerk said she thought she injured the suspect's arm when she hit her with the hammer.

He said he believed the Edwardsville robbery and the Nanticoke robbery were related.

"We're still reviewing the videotapes," he said.

Faux, however, was arraigned only on charges relating to the Price Chopper robbery on Tuesday night.

July 15, 2004

Cop describes bloody slaying

Testimony details how Wayne Adams allegedly killed his friend in Newport Township.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

Homicide suspect Wayne Adams "emptied the clip" of six or seven bullets from an assault rifle into Adam Martin, sending him to the ground, a trooper testified. But Adams, 25, noticed Martin's chest was still moving as he gasped for air.

Then, Adams loaded a 12-gauge shotgun with a single shell and fired one last shot into his longtime friend from about 3 to 5 feet away, state police Cpl. Leo Hannon testified Wednesday.

The corporal said Adams told him about the June 19 killing hours after the body of 46-year-old Martin was found at the bottom of an embankment in a wooded area of Newport Township.

Hannon's testimony at Adams' preliminary hearing Wednesday helped prosecutors convince a district justice they had sufficient evidence to take Adams to trial on a single count of homicide.

District Justice Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke forwarded the charge to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

The charge was leveled against Adams, of Hanover Township, after the body of Martin, also of Hanover Township, was found June 20.

Police have said Adams admitted shooting Martin because Martin threatened to expose a homosexual relationship the two had for 10 years, beginning when Adams was 15.

That relationship lasted until earlier this year, police said. The two remained friends, but ceased their sexual relationship.

On June 19, the two went drinking and target shooting in the wooded area until Adams told Martin he wanted a ride out of the woods.

Under questioning from Assistant District Attorney Jeff Tokach, Hannon testified that's when Martin began "pressuring" Adams for sex. Adams wanted to leave, Hannon said, but Martin wanted to drink a few beers.

Adams soon remembered the assault rifle loaded in Martin's vehicle, Hannon testified.

Adams went to the back of the vehicle. Instead of getting a beer, Adams returned with the rifle and shot Martin numerous times before getting the shotgun, Hannon said.

Adams' attorneys, Shelley Centini and Joe Yeager, asked Whittaker to dismiss the charge. Whittaker denied the request.

July 8, 2004

Driver of nude motorcycle passenger charged

Joseph Gronka, 34, was cited with disorderly conduct after Music Fest incident.

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

City police say the man who drove a naked Lisa Drozdowski past Music Fest on the back of a motorcycle acted in a disorderly manner.

Police recently charged the driver, Joseph Gronka, 34, of Bloomsburg, with a summary offense of disorderly conduct in connection with the June 12 incident.

Police said Gronka drove Drozdowski up Prospect Street near Patriot Square. Police stopped the motorcycle on Orchard Street, where Drozdowski, 39, of West Noble Street in Nanticoke, propped her feet up on the male driver, further exposing herself, arrest papers said.

Drozdowski, a Luzerne County employee, showed signs of intoxication and was taken into custody after being given her clothes, police said.

Once in a holding cell, she attempted to flush a pipe believed to be used for smoking crack or marijuana down a toilet, police said. Drozdowski also kicked an officer twice in the groin, police said.

She was charged with open lewdness, indecent exposure, public drunkenness, aggravated assault, simple assault, possession of drug paraphernalia and tampering with evidence.

Officer Joe Gydosh filed the non-traffic citation, which calls for Gronka to pay a \$150 fine plus \$117 in court costs and another \$10 fee.

The citation was filed at District Justice Donald Whittaker's office. Once Gronka receives the citation, he may plead guilty or not guilty.

If he pleads not guilty, a hearing will be scheduled. Drozdowski's preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 22.

June 16, 2004

Man accused of assault found not guilty

By Edward Lewis , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A Luzerne County jury deliberated nearly 90 minutes Tuesday before returning a verdict in favor of a 40-year-old Nanticoke man who was accused of assaulting and robbing his girlfriend.

Michael David Croney, Front Street, was found not guilty on charges of robbery, theft, receiving stolen property and two counts of simple assault.

"We're happy with the verdict," said Croney's defense lawyer, Joseph Sklarosky Jr. "We're pleased with the outcome. "There were a lot of inconsistencies that were brought out during trial; there were credibility issues as well," Sklarosky noted.

Croney was accused of punching his then-girlfriend, Bernadette Williams, in the face with a closed fist inside her Exeter apartment on Sept. 6, 2003.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Croney asked Williams for money and became upset when she refused to give him any. He grabbed her by the throat, punched her, and followed her outside when she ran through a parking lot. Croney pushed her to the ground and forcibly removed her purse containing an undetermined amount of money.

Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Hadley told the jury during closing arguments that Croney admitted to being under the influence of alcohol and drugs when he allegedly committed the act. She also reminded the jury to reflect upon Williams' testimony and the testimony of alleged witness Dawn Williamson.

"This was not a typical robbery," Hadley told the jury. "The couple were dating ... that's what makes this worse.

"You heard Bernadette and Dawn testify," Hadley said. "There was a struggle for the purse, he wanted the purse and Bernadette came away with a bloody nose."

Sklarosky told the jury Croney asked Williams for her purse because he thought his car keys were inside. He also questioned the credibility of Williams and Williamson.

"This case was about Croney getting his keys," Sklarosky said. "He thought his keys were in her purse.

"These are false allegations that they (Williams and Williamson) tried to sell to the police," Sklarosky told the jury during closing arguments.

Hadley said she found it odd that Croney went to a friend's residence who he couldn't remember to change his shirt. Police found a sweatshirt spattered in blood that Croney had dropped after he allegedly punched Williams.

The jury deliberated for one hour and 27 minutes before finding Croney not guilty of the charges.

Luzerne County Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr., who presided over the two-day trial, found Croney not guilty of summary harassment/stalking charges.

After the jury read their verdict, Croney remained in police custody pending the outcome of a probation violation in Lehigh County.

Sklarosky said the probation violation was the result of his arrest in Luzerne County and expects it to be lifted now that he had been found not guilty.

6/5/04

False Identification

A Nanticoke man has been charged with providing false identification to police.

Arrested May 26 on evidence of drunken driving, Joshua Yackimowicz provided the name of his stepbrother to police, police said. Additional charges of providing false reports to police, forgery and tampering with records have also been filed.

5/29/04

Court Briefs

Jules Blount, 25, of Nanticoke, pleaded guilty Thursday to firing a gun and lighting a fire inside a Ross Township home. State police at Shickshinny said Blount on Dec. 4 fired a shot into a couch inside John Weber's Kytte Road home.

Blount then struck Weber in the face and set fire to two blankets.

Weber left the home and later returned with Blount's brother. Blount also fired two shots at his brother.

Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. is scheduled to sentence Blount on charges of arson, simple assault and reckless endangerment at 8:15 a.m. June 29. Additional charges were dropped.

Maura Walsh, 23, of Nanticoke, was arrested on evidence of drunken driving after a one-car crash at 11:15 p.m.

Wednesday, state police said.

Walsh was westbound in a 2003 Mazda 6 on state Route 3006, near Smith's Road, when the vehicle veered off the road and struck a utility pole, state police said. The car then traveled into a drainage ditch, struck a dirt embankment and rolled onto its roof.

State police said Walsh showed signs of intoxication and was taken for a blood-alcohol test. Charges are pending the results of the test.

5/28/04

Nanticoke man involved in mishap with stolen vehicle

A Nanticoke man involved in a two-vehicle accident in Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday morning was injured, but tried to flee the scene on foot.

Wilkes-Barre police said Stephen M. Wasilewski was driving a 1996 Dodge stolen from Nanticoke when the vehicle struck another vehicle just after 6 a.m.

Wasilewski was traveling north on Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and for an unknown reason turned in to the path of a 2003 Ford driven by Dennis Hagy, of White Haven, who was driving south on the roadway near the intersection of Butler Street, according to police. Both vehicles were towed and Hagy was also injured.

Police said Wasilewski is facing charges for his role in the incident.

5/22/04

Nanticoke man connected to Kerkowski denied early parole

By Edward Lewis Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A 30-year-old Nanticoke man with ties to the late Tunkhannock-area pharmacist Michael Jason Kerkowski was denied early parole on Thursday.

Edward Ryan Nork had applied for early parole three times since February with each attempt being denied by Luzerne County Judge Mark Ciavarella, according to court records.

His latest attempt for early parole occurred May 7 when he submitted a petition on his own behalf.

Nork said that if released, he would immediately obtain a job to catch up on child support payments and assist his mother is who struggling with everyday needs.

He promised the court he would not fail and abide by rules and regulations set forth on him.

Judge Ciavarella denied Nork's request on Thursday.

Nork was arrested in January 2001 on separate charges that involved an attempt to obtain 60 OxyContin pills with a forged doctor's prescription from a Wilkes-Barre pharmacy and possession of marijuana charges.

Nork was sentenced to six months minimum to 18 months maximum and a consecutive term of two-years' probation in November 2001. He was granted immediate work release having served the minimum sentence at the time.

Nork was re-sentenced for a probation violation in November 2003 to six months minimum to 24 months maximum less one day and a consecutive term of one-year probation.

He applied for early parole in February and again in March that were both denied.

When Nork was arrested in January 2001, he was serving a one-year probation sentence for carrying a firearm without a license, according to court records.

According to court records from Wyoming County where Kerkowski had a pharmacy in Eaton Township, Nork had a prescription written by convicted Dr. Laureano Manual on a 3by-5 piece of notepad paper. Nork was unable to get the prescription filled at any pharmacy because many pharmacies stopped filling Dr. Manual's prescriptions and the prescription was not written on a regular prescription form.

Nork had two prescriptions written by Dr. Manual filled by Kerkowski for OxyContin pills. On his own, Nork wrote his own fraudulent prescriptions in the name of Ryan Nork that were filled by Kerkowski between March through late 2002, according to court records.

Kerkowski cut him off when he received an anonymous letter about the illegal activities.

Nork was one of seven persons convicted during the Kerkowski investigation.

While incarcerated at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, Nork was approached by another inmate who told him, "I heard you were getting a lot of Oxies out in the country," according to court records.

Nork asked the inmate, who is only identified in court records as John, if he meant Tunkhannock. The inmate replied that "there are a lot of welders from York who get drugs from that pharmacy, and if anything were to happen, they would find Nork," according to court records.

Records from the Bureau of Drug Control revealed Nork obtained 33 prescriptions in six months from Kerkowski. A total of 2,850 pills were OxyContin and 180 pills were for other controlled substances.

A Wyoming County jury convicted Kerkowski in February 2002 on three counts of delivery a controlled substance by a practitioner. He pleaded guilty in April 2002, to recklessly endangering another person, insurance fraud, false medical assistance claims and delivery of a controlled substance by a practitioner.

Kerkowski failed to appear for his sentencing hearing on May 14, 2002, and was reported missing.

His body and the body of his girlfriend, Tammy Lynn Fassett, were found buried in a shallow grave at 479 Mount

Olivet Road, Kingston Township, on June 5, 2003.

5/22/04

Assault Charges Filed

Kevin Zimmerman, 23, of East Church Street, was arrested Wednesday on assault charges after, police said, he caused his five-month pregnant wife to fall.

Zimmerman and his wife, Carrie, were arguing outside their home at 8 a.m. Wednesday when Zimmerman tried to pull away in his car.

As he pulled away, Carrie, who was leaning on the car window, fell, according to court papers.

He then yelled "I hope you bleed to death and lose the baby," court papers said.

He also told her he did not want his name as father on the birth certificate of their unborn child, according to Carrie's friend.

Carrie suffered lacerations to her right knee, left toes and right hand.

Later that day, Kevin told police he was getting ready to drive his daughter to Pope John Paul School at 7:30 a.m. as Carrie leaned in the window.

He told police he pulled away and saw Carrie fall to the ground, but did not stop, according to court papers.

Kevin was charged with simple assault and recklessly endangering another person. He was taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

Carrie and her son also reported that Kevin caused bruises on both sides of his son's face. The son had finger and hand marks on both sides of his face, according to court papers.

Carrie's son was taken to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for an examination.

5/20/04

Man pleads guilty to assaulting police officer

Steven Ernest Alaimo, West Washington Street, pleaded guilty to simple assault, resisting arrest and flight to avoid apprehension before Judge Joseph M. Augello.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Alaimo was arguing with his ex-girlfriend, with whom he used to live, at her residence on West Union Street, Nanticoke.

Alaimo left but returned a short time later with a club that he used to knock on the door and windows.

Alaimo called his current girlfriend, Amber Dennis, who came to the residence and engaged in a physical fight with his ex-girlfriend.

Alaimo flipped over tables and punched holes in the wall, telling his ex-girlfriend if he couldn't have her, no one could and threatened to kill her, according to the affidavit.

Alaimo was accused of hitting his ex-girlfriend with the club.

When police were called, Alaimo fled but was found sitting in the rear yard of Dennis' residence.

He ran inside Dennis' residence while police chased after him. Police were stopped by Dennis who closed the door on Sgt. William Shultz.

Sgt. Shultz made his way inside and advised Alaimo he was under arrest. Alaimo resisted and punched Sgt. Shultz in the face.

The struggle continued outside until Sgt. Shultz lost his grip when Alaimo ripped off his shirt. He ran and was pursued by Officer Joseph Gydosh, who had Alaimo at gunpoint.

Alaimo stopped but continued to flee on foot until Sgt. Shultz captured him on South Prospect Street. Sgt. Shultz suffered injuries to his mouth and left knee.

Alaimo was ordered to repay the Nanticoke Police Department and Sgt. Shultz \$8,466 for medical expenses.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Wednesday, June 30, at 9:30 a.m. Dennis was not charged for her alleged role, Sgt. Shultz said.

5/7/04

Wanamie man charged in fatal shooting

By Gene Skordinski , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A Newport Township man was arraigned Thursday on homicide charges, hours after he allegedly shot and killed a Nanticoke man following an argument. According to police, Mark C. Arnold, 37, of 1253 Center St., Wanamie, allegedly shot Nicholas Havard, 20, of 60 W. Green St., Nanticoke, in the face after the pair argued over a previous fight involving Arnold's son. Arnold was charged with homicide and firearms not to be carried without a license.

Newport Township Police Officer Jocelyn Wadzin responded to the scene of the shooting at 9:15 p.m. and, upon arrival, found Havard lying on his back with severe bleeding from the facial area, below the left eye.

A witness at the scene told police a male, later identified as Arnold, exited a Jeep, pulled a small gun from underneath his sweat shirt and placed the gun to Havard's face. The witness said Arnold pulled the trigger.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Paul Gushock told investigators Arnold had received a telephone call prior to the shooting, informing him that several kids were looking for his son because of a previous altercation.

Following the phone call, Gushock, along with Mark and Lisa Arnold, got in. Lisa Arnold's Jeep and drove to Weis Market to meet Matt Zaborney.

Authorities said Zaborney advised Mark Arnold that a kid was beaten up and they were blaming Arnold's son for the beating. Gushock also told investigators that Zaborney told Mark Arnold "there was a bunch of kids" looking for his son.

Mark Arnold, Lisa Arnold and Gushock then proceeded to Arnold's residence, where they saw three cars slowly driving by Arnold's residence. The defendant then told Lisa Arnold to follow the cars in an attempt to discover why they were looking for his son.

The three cars pulled into the parking lot across from Savitsky's Edge Bar. Lisa Arnold stopped her vehicle in the middle of the road.

The individuals got out of the cars and started to yell they were going to beat up the defendant's son because he had beat up Luke Capie.

Mark Arnold got out of the Jeep and approached the individuals. Arnold told the individuals his son didn't do anything. Gushock told investigators one of the kids got into Mark Arnold's face.

According to investigators, Arnold pulled a gun from the front of his pants and pointed the gun at one of the individual's faces, shooting Havard.

Mark Arnold returned to the Jeep, where he claimed he had only intended to scare the people off.

He then told Lisa Arnold to leave the scene. She then drove along Old Newport Road towards Nanticoke. She slowed the vehicle and Mark Arnold got out of the vehicle in the area of the Newport Center Cemetery.

Arnold told police, "I did not mean to shoot the victim and it was an accident."

Following the arraignment before District Justice Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke, Arnold asked to be admitted to a hospital.

"I don't want to live anymore," Arnold said. "If I could give my life for the kid, I would."

"You were just released from a hospital," Whittaker replied.

Arnold is incarcerated in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail. A preliminary hearing is set for Thursday, May 13, at 1 p.m. before Whittaker.

More than 20 investigators were seen on the paved road to the Newport Center Cemetery following Arnold's arraignment. The road is about a quarter mile from the scene of the shooting.

A .22-caliber handgun was discarded approximately 200 yards to the rear of the defendant's residence.

State Police Troop P Major Case Team investigated the shooting at the request of the Luzerne County district attorney's office and Newport Township police.

5/4/04

Convicted robber charged in Nanticoke bank hold-up

James Henry Spence was released in February after serving 71 months in prison.

By TERRIE MORGAN-BESECKER-tmorgan@leader.net

A convicted bank robber who was released from prison in February has been charged with last week's robbery at First National Community Bank in Nanticoke.

James Henry Spence, 37, of West Nanticoke, Plymouth Township, was apprehended in Erie during the weekend and should be transported back to Luzerne County as soon as possible, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Fran Sempa.

Spence is charged with stealing \$1,290 from the 194 S. Market St. bank on April 28.

According to an arrest affidavit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania:

Spence entered the bank around 11:44 a.m. and gave a teller a note that said "Have a gun, want 20s, 50s and 100s." The teller complied and Spence fled the bank.

Shortly after the robbery, Lionel Bassett of Nanticoke reported that his car had been stolen. Police arrived at Bassett's home and spoke to his friend, Elizabeth Roscoe, who was selling the vehicle for Bassett.

Roscoe told police a man offered to buy the car, but asked her to hold it for an hour until he went to the bank to obtain money. The man returned and paid Roscoe \$250, but refused to wait until Bassett returned to take the car.

Roscoe later identified the man as Spence from a photo shown to her by police. Police received further confirmation of his identity from fingerprints recovered from the note he left at the bank. The teller also identified him in a photo. Spence had been released on Feb. 8 after serving a 71-month federal prison sentence for a 1998 bank robbery in Georgia, according to the affidavit.

Sempa said an arrest warrant was issued for Spence for the Nanticoke robbery on Friday. He did not know the details of how Spence was apprehended in Erie.

4/21/2004

Nanticoke man sentenced on assault charges

A 20-year-old Nanticoke man was sentenced in Luzerne County Court for assaulting two men with a pellet gun and a hammer last August.

Daniel Joseph Williams, West Union Street, was sentenced by Judge Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. to four consecutive terms of four months' probation on charges of simple assault, resisting arrest, false identification to law enforcement and hindering apprehension. He was also ordered to pay a fine for public drunkenness.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Williams and Joshua Derr, 21, were involved in a fight with Charles Jobst IV and Joshua Hallas on South Maple Street, Nanticoke, on Aug. 17, 2003.

Williams pointed a handgun at Jobst and Hallas. Nanticoke police later learned the handgun was a pellet gun.

Jobst was struck in the head with a hammer by Derr, according to the affidavit.

Police found two baseball bats, a pellet gun and a hammer inside a vehicle where Williams and Derr were sitting.

Williams and Derr were being questioned by police when Williams fled. Derr stepped in front of an officer in an attempt to block his pursuit of Williams, according to the affidavit.

Williams resisted arrest by assaulting several officers causing an injury to one officer.

Derr, now living in Bethlehem, was sentenced April 14 by President Judge Michael Conahan to 12 months in the accelerated rehabilitation program on charges of simple assault, hindering apprehension, obstructing administration of law enforcement and disorderly conduct.

Derr was ordered to complete an alcohol highway safe driving school, 25 hours of community service and write letters of apology to the officers and victims.

2/20/04

Charges waived for Nanticoke vandals

Charges against three Nanticoke men arrested last December for shooting out the windows of more than 60 vehicles were waived to Luzerne County Court on Thursday.

Appearing before District Justice Donald Whittaker of Nanticoke were Salvadore Cassandro, 19, of 120 E. Broad St., Nanticoke; Michael Stewart, 19, of 43 E. Kirmar Ave., Alden and Timothy Mowod, 18, of 120 E. Broad St., Nanticoke. The accused are charged with criminal conspiracy, criminal mischief, propulsion of missiles into vehicles, sale and use of air rifles, and possession of instruments of crime.

According to the affidavits of probable cause, police were called to a residence on Center Street at about 7 a.m. on Dec. 7 on a report that the suspects and Melissa Lowerey, address unknown, were taunting Kimberly Beczek and Erica Neyhard to come outside and fight.

Earlier that morning, Beczek had told police that a window on her vehicle was shot out and that she had allegedly seen Lowerey driving away in a dark-colored vehicle with a loud exhaust.

Witnesses also told police they had seen Lowerey drive away in a vehicle after hearing a window smash.

During the day on Dec. 7, police received multiple reports of vandalism involving shattered vehicle windows.

Officers Kevin Grevera and Joseph Kosch went to 120 E. Broad St., where they observed a dark blue 1993 Nissan, equipped with a customized exhaust system and a muffler, parked in front. Police also found several pellets on the floor of a hallway leading to the apartment.

During the investigation, Lowerey admitted she was at Beczek's residence with the suspects, had driven around Nanticoke with them, and used an airpowered pellet handgun to shot out windows of two vehicles, according to the affidavits.

Court papers also stated that Cassandro admitted to shattering 15 to 20 vehicle windows, and that Stewart admitted to shattering 15 to 24 vehicle windows.

More than \$5,000 in damages was reported to police based upon 59 complaints.

The defendants are free under \$25,000 bail each.

4/06/2004

Police want to know who killed animals

By Mike Struckus , Citizens' Voice Intern

Nanticoke Police note: e-mail us at npddet@yahoo.com or call 735-2200 if you have any information concerning this article

An investigation was being conducted Monday that could point the finger at possible suspects responsible for the mutilation of animals found Friday in a wooded area off West Main Street, near the border of Nanticoke and Newport Township, said Nanticoke City police.

However, Nanticoke Police Sgt. William Shultz stressed that the investigation is still being conducted and all possible situations are being looked at to find out who was responsible.

"There is a lot of information we have to address, and we're trying to look at all the aspects of the story," Shultz said. Wildlife Conservation Officer Thomas Swiech said that it appears that the remains, which were found piled on top of each other, are those of several deer, a coyote, two foxes, and an owl.

Nanticoke police believe that some feathers from birds and remnants of cats were also found, but nothing has been confirmed yet.

Sgt. Shultz said that police officials have received several complaints about peculiar behavior around the area where the animals were found.

"There have been reports of individuals, dressed in black, and standing around the fire," he stated.

Other reports were also confirmed of an eyewitness seeing animals being propped up with sticks, as if in a ritualistic style.

Newport and Nanticoke police were working from a tip from an anonymous individual who said a shotgun was seen being handled by the group who may have been involved with the killings and called police after the group spotted the person and pointed the gun at the person.

"Something is going on," Shultz said. "Something is wrong, and we need to address it."

Anyone who has information can call Newport Township police at 735-2001; Nanticoke police at 735-4000; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Luzerne County at 825-4111; or the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 675-1143.

4/3/04

Circular 'altar' with animal remains in Newport Township a mystery

By DAVID WEISS-dweiss@leader.net

Nanticoke Police note: e-mail us at npddet@yahoo.com or call 735-2200 if you have any information concerning this article

NEWPORT TWP. - Township and Nanticoke City police are investigating a pile of about 25 to 30 burned and mutilated animal remains found in a "circular-type altar" in a wooded area, police said.

Nanticoke Officer Kevin Grevera said police received a call last week notifying them of the pit found behind the 500 block of West Main Street in Nanticoke. The location is within neighboring Newport Township's boundary.

Remains of birds, dogs, deer and cats were detected in the stone pit, which has a circumference of about 30 feet, he said. Grevera also said officers recently received a complaint of a black Labrador retriever being found with its paws cut off.

The find is being investigated by the two police departments, the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals and the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Grevera said he could not speculate if the slayings are related to any type of satanic rituals.

"It's fairly obvious that it isn't legitimate hunters or trappers," he said. "We do have additional information we are following up on."

Most of the animals in the pit have been reduced to bones. Others appear skinned, but their bodies still mainly intact. Some fur was visible, along with deer legs - chopped inches above the hooves.

The sight raised enough ire in Nanticoke resident John Hall to make him want to start a reward through the police department to offer anyone who helps bring an arrest. He wants to start the reward with \$250 of his own.

Nanticoke Police note: e-mail us at npddet@yahoo.com or call 735-2200 if you have any information concerning this article

Hall and his friend, Robert Belcher Jr., learned of the pit after Belcher's 15-year-old son discovered it while riding an all-terrain vehicle. Hall is familiar with the area, where he walks his dog.

"I'm out here every day," Hall said. "When I heard about this, I thought, 'Oh, how terrible.'"

The police officer was unsure how long the remains had been at the location. Any charges filed in the investigation will

be done with guidance from the district attorney's office.

"There are a lot of cruelty to animal charges which are applicable, in addition to reckless burning and conspiracy," Grevera said.

There have been many brush and garbage fires in the area recently, Grevera said. But the remote location makes it tough for police to watch.

"It's one of those areas we have a great deal of difficulty patrolling," he said.

2003

12/20/03

Vandalism suspect surrenders to police

Timothy Mowod, 18, of 120 E. Broad St. Nanticoke, turned himself over to the Nanticoke police Tuesday night following the arrest of Salvatore Cassandro 19, and Michael Stewart, 19.

Cassandro, 120 E. Broad St., Nanticoke and Stewart, 43 E. Kirmar Ave., Alden, were arrested Tuesday for their alleged involvement in a vandalism spree in which they shot out windows of more than 60 vehicles on Dec. 7 in Nanticoke.

Mowod is also charged in the vandalism spree.

Police charged the three suspects with four counts of criminal conspiracy, two separate counts of criminal mischief, and one count each of propulsion of missiles into vehicles, sale and use of air rifles and possession of instruments of crime.

12/17/03

2 Charged in vandalism spree in Nanticoke; 3rd sought

Nanticoke police arrested two men on Tuesday for their alleged involvement in a vandalism spree in which they shot out windows to more than 60 vehicles early on Dec. 7.

Salvatore Cassandro, 19, of 120 E. Broad St., Nanticoke, and Michael Stewart, 19, of 43 E. Kirmar Ave., Alden, were arrested.

A third suspect, Timothy Mowod, 18, of 120 E. Broad St., Nanticoke, remained at-large, police said.

Police charged the three suspects with four counts of criminal conspiracy, two separate counts of criminal mischief, and one count each of propulsion of missiles into vehicles, sale and use of air rifles and possession instruments of crime.

According to the affidavits of probable cause, police were called to a residence on Center Street at about 7:10 a.m. on Dec. 7 on a report that the suspects and Melissa Lowerey, address unknown, were taunting Kimberly Beczek and Erica Neyhard to come outside and fight.

Earlier that morning, Beczek had told police that a window on her vehicle was shot out and that she had allegedly seen Lowerey driving away in a dark-colored vehicle with a loud exhaust.

Witnesses also told police they had seen Lowerey drive away in a vehicle after hearing a window smash

During the day on Dec. 7, police received multiple reports of vandalism involving shattered vehicle windows.

Officers Kevin J. Grevera and Joseph Kosch went to 120 E. Broad St., where they observed a dark blue 1993 Nissan, equipped with a customized exhaust system and a muffler, parked in front. Police also found several pellets on the floor of a hallway leading to the apartment.

Lowerey was found inside the apartment and was transported to the police department. She allegedly admitted to police she was at Beczek's residence with the suspects, had driven around Nanticoke with them, and used an air-powered pellet handgun to shoot out windows of two vehicles, according to the affidavits.

Lowerey allegedly told police the suspects shot at and shattered windows of numerous vehicles in Nanticoke early on Dec. 7, according to the affidavits.

Police interviewed Mowod at about 10 a.m. on Dec. 7. He allegedly admitted of shooting out windows of five to eight vehicles. Mowod told police he drove the vehicle, which is registered to his mother, around Nanticoke while Cassandro and Stewart shot out numerous vehicle windows.

Mowod gave police two Powerline 15XT CO2 pellet handguns and pellets that were allegedly used in the vandalism spree

Police said the pellets Mowod gave them matched the ones found on the hallway floor outside his apartment and those used to shatter vehicle windows, according to the affidavits.

A cartridge used to power the pellet handguns was found on the ground near a 1988 Ford Ranger on East Washington Street that had a window shattered, police said.

According to the affidavits, Cassandro admitted to police that he allegedly shattered 15 to 20 vehicle windows and

Stewart admitted to shattering 15 to 24 vehicle windows with the air-powered handguns.

Cassandro and Stewart were accompanied by police and pointed out the streets they drove on where they shot out windows.

Police said Cassandro and Stewart identified the air-powered handguns they used during the vandalism spree

Vehicles that sustained damage were on Washington, Hanover, Railroad and Market streets, including vehicles on Apollo Circle, according to the affidavits.

More than \$5,000 in damages was reported to police based upon 59 complaints from victims as of Dec. 12.

Police said they are expecting more damage estimates from victims who have not yet reported.

Police did not say if Lowerey would be charged.

Cassandro and Stewart appeared before District Justice Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and were sent to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$25,000 bail each

A preliminary hearing is tentatively set for Monday, Dec. 22, before Justice Whittaker.

11/15/03

Former Nanticoke tax collector placed on probation

By Lisa Napersky , Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

A former Nanticoke tax office employee accused of mishandling \$184,000 in tax revenues was sentenced Friday by Luzerne County President Judge Michael Conahan to three years of probation and ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution. Brenda Davis, 41, of East Field Street, Nanticoke, pleaded guilty in October 2002 to three counts of theft, two counts of forgery and one count of default as a tax collector. She admitted to stealing an undetermined amount of tax money in her position at the Nanticoke tax office, where she was employed from 1993 until her suspension in June 2001. She resigned the following month. Two theft charges and one forgery charge stemmed from the theft of checks valued at \$5,558 and \$7,565. The third theft charge involved accusations that Davis retained payroll deductions from the salaries of three city employees. The investigation began in 2000 when an audit revealed \$3,500 was mishandled for tax year 1997. While investigators were checking records, a bank deposit bag containing \$9,000 was mysteriously found in a filing cabinet, widening the probe. Davis was scheduled to be sentenced in April, but Assistant District Attorney Jacqueline Carroll agreed to delay sentencing until Nov. 13 so that a restitution amount could be determined. Officials decided to do preliminary audits and wait and see if any taxpayers who properly paid their taxes in the Nanticoke office had their properties listed for tax sale in September. Carroll said an alternate plan to perform an extensive audit to determine how much revenue was stolen or lost was scrapped because it could have cost in excess of \$118,000. The audit would have been paid for by the three taxing bodies involved - the city, the county and Greater Nanticoke Area School District. "It took a while for everyone to get together and get their figures straight. By accepting the plea agreement, we alleviated the necessity for a full audit and wound up saving taxpayers a great deal of money," noted Carroll. "Fortunately, all of the taxing entities had insurance to cover their losses." It was determined that the problems created deficits of \$101,509 in Greater Nanticoke Area School District, \$53,000 in Luzerne County, and \$30,000 in Nanticoke City. Carroll said Judge Conahan sentenced Davis within the standard guidelines and based the restitution amount on her assets and her ability to pay. Carroll explained that, now that Davis has been sentenced, the taxing entities could seek reimbursement from their respective insurance carriers. Nanticoke City Solicitor Bernard Kotulak said the city had settled claims with its insurance companies, and the losses have been compensated in full. He noted that the insurance carriers have indicated they would not seek restitution from Davis. Attorney Ferris Webby, who represents Davis along with Attorney Joseph Iracki, said that, although his client admitted to taking some money to pay bills, it was more a matter of malfeasance than blatant thievery. "It was a case of her not putting money in the appropriate place and checks that were never cashed," stated Webby. "Then she was afraid of losing her job, and it just snowballed. They were not able to prove she had any great sums of money stashed away."

8/6/03

Nanticoke Man Charged With Hitting Flagperson

A Nanticoke man is facing criminal charges following an incident July 15 when he allegedly struck a female flag person with his car while she was directing traffic for a city paving project.

Valerie Emenheiser was working for American Asphalt Paving Co., a contractor retained by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to do paving work on Lower Broadway Street in Nanticoke near the West Nanticoke Bridge.

Emenheiser sustained minor injuries to her arm and was treated and released from Wilkes-Barre Mercy Hospital following the incident.

After Frank Charles Wozniak, 39, River Street, allegedly hit Emenheiser around 4:30 p.m., he drove his Chevrolet Tahoe onto freshly spread, hot asphalt before coming to a stop. Nanticoke police said Wozniak has been charged with recklessly endangering another person and two counts of disorderly conduct. He also was cited for reckless driving, careless driving and failure to yield the right-of-way to an authorized pedestrian engaged in work on a highway.

Police stopped Wozniak shortly after the incident at North Walnut and Lower Broadway streets at the stop sign. He admitted to hitting Emenheiser, but denied the circumstances that led to his arrest.

Wozniak will appear before District Justice Donald Whitaker of Nanticoke for a preliminary hearing, which has not been scheduled.

According to the affidavit of probable cause, Wozniak was directed by a member of the construction crew, Anthony Jones, and Emenheiser to turn left since fresh hot paving material had just been laid on Lower Broadway Street. However, Wozniak allegedly argued with both, calling Emenheiser a derisive name.

Wozniak then allegedly spun out when he tried to ignore their warnings, hitting Emenheiser's left arm and spun her around.

Jones caught Emenheiser before she fell to the ground. The impact was strong enough to knock Emenheiser's helmet from her head.

Police estimated it would have took Wozniak one minute to travel the detour to get back to where he was going.

Investigators are Nanticoke Det. William Shultz, Patrolman Joseph Guydosh and Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Tim Doherty.

8/5/03

Nanticoke man gets 3 years probation

By RON LIEBACK rlieback@leader.net

After U.S. District Judge A. Richard Caputo read more than 100 emotional letters supporting Ronald May, the 62-year-old received a lesser sentence.

May faced spending time in federal prison. Instead, the Nanticoke resident was sentenced to three years of probation on charges of conspiracy and tampering with a vehicle identification number. The first six months will involve electronic monitoring.

"You have a lot of people that are supportive," Caputo said.

May's attorney, Frank Nocito, asked for the reduced sentence, stating May's cooperation began immediately after the investigation.

"Cooperation was timely," Nocito said.

Nocito later stated that May attempted suicide from the pressure and anxiety of the trial and said people threatened him with harassing phone calls.

"Mr. May thought he saw a man armed at his business before testimony and trial," Nocito said.

And May apologized for what he did.

"I would just like to say I'm sorry for what happened," May said to Caputo.

"I think it was an appropriate sentence," Nocito said.

In January, May entered a guilty plea to altering a vehicle identification number in connection with John Halliday.

Halliday was convicted in January of four counts of mail fraud in connection with the staged theft of his pickup from the Wyoming Valley Mall in 1997. His cousin, Richard Halliday, was acquitted at the same trial.

An additional co-defendant, Jeremy Kashatus, entered a guilty plea of conspiracy to commit mail fraud. Kashatus later withdrew his plea. No trial date has been set for him.

John Halliday, a former Hanover Township police officer, was sentenced to 10 months in federal prison in April

12/23/03

Times Leader Editorial column (Our Opinion)

Nanticoke officers go beyond the call of duty

PULLING UP boot straps and slapping on a coat of paint and a happy face won't solve the problems of cities with deferred maintenance and no money to make the fix.

Then again, it didn't hurt in Nanticoke where members of the police force proved themselves resourceful, proud and willing to do what it takes to make their lot better.

Police officers and volunteers recently organized and modernized the headquarters there. Doing the work themselves, police officers created holding cells and specialized rooms for evidence and DUI processing. They built a barracks and

improved the shooting range.

They sold hoagies, raised \$1,500 and bought specialized equipment for stopping fleeing vehicles and a metal detector. They used some of the money to support other groups in the community.

Members donated their own tires and cars and sweat equity, making an estimated \$9,000 worth of improvements, changes that didn't cost the city anything.

Officers said they understand the city is operating with a deficit of \$1 million and they were very aware maintenance, much less improvements, could be slow in coming.

So after one officer noticed a drainage problem near the parking garage, bought cement and fixed the problem himself, other improvements followed. And officers continued policing Nanticoke, working on their old station house on their own time; painting and carpentry and getting grant money for computers.

Obviously this isn't the solution for every situation or city. Some places are constrained by rules and guidelines and not every worker wants to, or is able to commit the time that is required for a Nanticoke-style fix.

But most everyone can admire the effort and self-esteem of the Nanticoke police department. Dec. 13, 2003

Cops' station renovation saves ailing city thousands

At no cost to public, officers raise funds, modernize their quarters.

By DAVID WEISS - dweiss@leader.net

They have been trained to patrol streets and round up criminals, but city police officers have found other skills helpful in improving their workplace.

Officer Mike Roke is a novice electrician. Officer Kevin Grevera is handy with a paintbrush. And officer Joe Gudyosh dabbles in carpentry.

Their efforts, combined with the volunteer work of all the city's officers, helped turn the city's police station from a stuffy, deteriorating base to a organized, modern headquarters.

They remodeled the station's holding cells, installed DUI and evidence processing rooms with the proper equipment, bought computers and performed numerous maintenance tasks.

All of it came at no cost to the city taxpayers because the officers got the materials with their own money, grants or through donations. They also did the work themselves, on their own time.

"We don't do this on city time," said police Chief James Cheshinski.

The officers started the project because they understand the city's financial status makes it unable to pay for the work. The city's deficit has reached \$1 million.

Without the repairs, the department would have continued to deteriorate, with parts of a ceiling falling, messy storage areas, and dimly lit areas.

A drainage problem near the parking garage was one of the first things Roke wanted fixed. The problem forced officers to swerve their vehicles around spots - until he got off duty one day, bought a few bags of cement and fixed it himself.

"The city government always moves in slow motion," Roke said. "We've learned to be pretty self-reliant."

Among the work the officers performed:

Donated tires for police vehicles.

Grevera donated his former personal vehicle to the force to use as an unmarked cruiser, with Roke and Gudyosh installing the police equipment.

Hoagie sales helped them raise \$1,500 to buy stop sticks - used to flatten the tires of a fleeing vehicle in a chase - and a metal detector, and donate funds toward a coal miner memorial, a children's safety program and sports teams.

Built a barracks, equipped with two cots and two showers for officers working long shifts at the station.

Purchased three computers with grant money.

Improved the shooting range, and installed additional windows to improve ventilation at the station, located in the basement of the municipal building.

"This didn't just happen overnight," Roke said. "Everybody did something."

One of the biggest improvements was renovating a storage area near the holding cells. They painted the holding cells; added lights; and built the DUI, evidence and fingerprinting processing units behind the cells. The addition contains a video recorder, lockers for weapons and safety mats.

The processing center allows officers to handle drunken driving suspects at the station instead of taking the suspects to Wilkes-Barre facilities.

The new area also prevents the officers from parading criminals through parts of the station where the public might be.

"It all goes back to pride," said Cheshinski, who noted his office furniture is all donated. "Nothing in this office is city property - except for the phone line."

The officers figure they saved the city at least \$9,000 in material, plus labor, which could have costs thousands more. "We feel like we want to give back to the community that stood by us," Grevera said. Cheshinski said the work also has increased camaraderie and efficiency in the department. The officers plan to continue to make improvements in the department. Roke said he will try to keep most of his electrical work to the Police Department. "I'm not gonna be going door-to-door asking people if they need receptacles replaced," a joking Roke said.

5/17/03

Man charged in theft of stained glass

A man was arrested in connection with a Nanticoke burglary Friday morning after he was caught carrying a stolen stained glass window, police said. The man is also considered a suspect in several other burglaries, city police said. William Bagielto, 37, 148 W. Church St., Nanticoke, was charged with burglary, theft, receiving stolen property and two counts of criminal trespass.

Three officers spotted Bagielto carrying an antique stained glass window in the 100 block of West Church Street. He told officers Leonard NardoZZo, Joseph Kosch and Richard Vietz that he found the window behind Weis Markets on Lower Broadway, police said. Police said that during a later interview with NardoZZo and Detective William Shultz, Bagielto admitted forcibly removing the window from an apartment building at 122 E. Main St. and breaking another, which fell to the sidewalk.

When Bagielto's home was searched, Nanticoke police found items taken during burglaries at 136 E. Ridge St., 22 W. Ridge St. and 154 W. Church St. Bagielto is being considered a suspect in those crimes, police said. He was arraigned before District Justice Donald Whittaker, who set bail at \$25,000. Bagielto's preliminary hearing is scheduled for 9 a.m. May 22.

2003/6/02

Woman Gets Prison Over Anthrax Scare

A Wilkes-Barre woman was sentenced to 14 months in jail for her involvement in an anthrax scare in Nanticoke, the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania said Thursday.

Emily Forman, 27, mailed 17 anthrax hoax letters to local, state and federal officials, said U.S. Attorney Thomas Marino. The letters contained a white, powdery substance intended to look like anthrax.

On October 22, Forman and co-conspirator Rosemary Zavrel, 58, put the hoax letters in a mailbox at the Nanticoke post office, according to Marino. Two of the letters were mailed to President Bush. The woman were trying to frame two teens who allegedly picked on Zavrel's son.

Three days after the letters were mailed, U.S. postal inspectors arrested Forman and Zavrel. After Forman was indicted, she pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to mail threatening communications and to a separate charge of aiding and abetting another in the mailing of the letters.

In July, a federal jury in Scranton found Zavrel guilty of the same charges as Forman, and Zavrel is awaiting sentencing. Marino said that under the United States Sentencing Guidelines, Forman will be required to serve at least 85 percent of her sentence. U.S. District Judge A. Richard Caputo sentenced Forman.

2002

Man is arrested and accused of peeping and burglary

Early Wednesday Morning on 11/14/01 officer Joseph Phillips spotted a man standing on the pedals of his bicycle, his hands gripping a window sill as he looked into a window on Union St. He is accused of being a peeping Tom and a burglar and is behind bars in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000.00 bail. Police say he also broke into one home Tuesday night, threatening the 56 year old man who lives there. He also smashed windows in two other homes. **Cheshinski and Shultz Honored**



L To R..Mayor Toole, Sergeant Shultz, Captain Cheshinski and Chief Zaremba

Mayor Toole presented Capt. Cheshinski and Detective Sgt. Shultz with letters of commendation to honor them for their quick analysis of the recent anthrax scare at the Nanticoke Post Office. (See story below)

Two Persons Arrested In Anthrax Hoax

A plot for revenge resulted in the closing of the Nanticoke Post Office on Tuesday, October 23, 2001. An anthrax scare led to the arrest of two women in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Rosemary Zavrel and Emily Forman both of Wilkes-Barre were charged with mailing threatening communication, under the United States Crimes Code, after investigators said the pair mailed envelopes filled with white powder. They were arraigned and transported to Lackawanna County Correctional Facility to await a bail hearing.

District Attorney David Lupas credited the Nanticoke Police Department with breaking the case. He noted the arrests were the result of a cooperative investigation, including Nanticoke Police, District Attorney's office, U.S. Postal Service, Secret Service and others.

Doctor Charged With Writing Illegal Prescriptions

Dr. Laureano Manuel was arrested October 16, 2001 on various fraud and drug charges following a two-year investigation by the state Attorney General's Office and Nanticoke police. He was arraigned before District Justice Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke and jailed on \$75,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Oct. 25, 2001.

Arrest papers say he wrote prescriptions for various drugs, such as the painkiller OxyContin and methadone, a synthetic narcotic used in the treatment of heroin addiction.

Manuel is also charged with four counts of Medicaid fraud and two counts each of prescription of a controlled substance outside medical treatment standards, prescription of a controlled substance to a drug dependent person and acquisition of a controlled substance by fraud.

Investigators raided Manuel's Nanticoke office in June 2000, seizing medical records.

The arrest was a result of an investigation by the Nanticoke police and the Medicaid Control Section, Bureau of Narcotics investigation.

2001