

12/30/2016

Newborn's death under investigation in Nanticoke

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

Police are investigating the death of a nine-day-old girl whose mother was arraigned Thursday on unrelated drug possession charges.

Police began investigating the death of the child after she died on Nov. 20. Paramedics responded to the East Union Street home, for a report of a child not breathing, they tried to revive the baby, but were unsuccessful. They transported the child to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead. Authorities are waiting for the results of an autopsy, said Nanticoke police Chief Tom Wall.

Since then, officers arrested Sydney Marie Simon, 26, of Nanticoke, on an unrelated domestic violence charge on Dec. 18. When staff at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility searched her, they found a bag hidden within the lining of her bra that contained 37 pills, including Tramadol, Klonopin, and Flexeril, according to a criminal complaint. Police charged Simon with possession of a controlled substance.

Simon appeared before Magisterial District Judge Donald L. Whittaker for a preliminary arraignment on Thursday. She was lodged in LCCF in lieu of \$100,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 1 p.m. Jan. 4, 2017.

12/30/2016

Pair arraigned on drug charges stemming from Nanticoke shooting

sscinto@citizensvoice.com

A city man who survived a shooting and his girlfriend were arraigned Thursday on drug charges stemming from the shooting incident.

Kenneth Powell, 30, and Courtney Padden, 26, were arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker on Thursday afternoon.

Police investigated Powell and Padden's East Spring Street home after Powell was injured in a shooting outside the house on the morning of Dec. 8.

While searching the home, police found a large bag of suspected marijuana in a drawer belonging to Padden and another large bag of marijuana in a safe in the basement along with "capsules of a brown substance suspected to be a derivative of cannabis," arrest papers state.

Police also recovered syringes of cannabis liquid, digital scales, packaging materials, containers of a substance believed to be a mixture of marijuana, a glass marijuana pipe and other paraphernalia. Arrest papers state police also found \$12,950 in cash stashed in bags in two separate dressers.

Police executed a search warrant on the home after investigating the scene of the shooting where Powell suffered an injury. Nanticoke Police Chief Thomas Wall said officers detected "an extreme odor of marijuana" coming from the home during the investigation.

Powell was shot after he confronted an unidentified man who had broken into his home in the early-morning hours of Dec. 8.

A fight ensued outside the home and the suspect pulled out a pistol and shot Powell in the back. Wall said at the time that the bullet exited near Powell's stomach and he was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center for surgery.

The suspected shooter has not been arrested.

Padden and Powell both face charges of manufacturing with intent to deliver, conspiracy to manufacture with the intent to deliver and use or possession of drug paraphernalia. Padden's bail was set at \$150,000 and Powell's at \$250,000 — both were in Luzerne County Correctional Facility as of Thursday evening.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled for Padden and Powell on Jan. 4 at 1 p.m. at Whittaker's office.

12/29/2016

Nanticoke police investigating death of 9-day-old infant

tkellar@timesleader.com

City police and the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office are investigating the death of a 9-day-old girl.

According to Nanticoke Police Chief Thomas Wall:

Officers were dispatched to a East Union Street residence on Nov. 20 for the report of an unresponsive infant. First

responders attempted CPR on the baby, and she was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley in Plains Township where she was pronounced dead.

Wall said the investigation is ongoing and authorities are awaiting results of toxicology tests on the infant.

The infant's mother, Sydney Marie Simon, 26, of Nanticoke, was arraigned on an unrelated charge on Thursday.

Simon faces charges of possessing contraband by an inmate. According to police, Simon was in the Luzerne County Correction Facility on a domestic violence charge. The domestic violence charge is not related to the investigation into the baby's death.

12/29/2016

Warrior Run man faces domestic violence charges

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

City police arrested a Warrior Run resident on outstanding domestic violence charges after a citizen reported the man was trying to break into a city residence.

A resident reported that Irving Mark Tattersall, 52, was trying to enter an East Ridge Street residence and acting suspicious on Tuesday.

Police said Tattersall had outstanding charges against him for a domestic violence incident on Monday.

In that incident, the alleged victim told police Tattersall attacked her when she asked him to leave her home. She said Tattersall slapped her in the face, wrapped his hands around her throat, grabbed her by the hair to force her into a chair and shoved his fingers in her mouth. Before fleeing the Kosciuszko Street home, the victim said Tattersall threw beer and a glass at her and kicked over the Christmas tree and coffee table.

Tattersall was taken into police custody on charges of simple assault and harassment. Police said Tattersall became combative and failed to follow directions from officers while waiting for arraignment at district court and will likely face additional charges of aggravated assault and disorderly conduct.

12/22/2016

Nanticoke woman accused of prescription fraud

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke woman who once worked for an insurance company has been charged with illegally accessing patient information to fill fraudulent prescriptions.

Chambre Frazier, 27, stole the identities of patients at Highmark Insurance where she once worked as a customer service representative to illegally obtain prescription drugs, according to a news release from the state Attorney General's Office.

Frazier called various pharmacies, using the names of the patients and their physicians to fill 16 fraudulent prescriptions for drugs including Promethazine, Xanax and Alprazolam, the news release states.

Highmark Insurance would then be billed for the drugs, under the names of the patients whose information Frazier allegedly used.

Frazier is charged with multiple counts of obtaining a controlled substance by misrepresentation, insurance fraud, criminal use of a communication facility and identity theft.

The charges were filed through the office of Magisterial District Judge Thomas Malloy in Wilkes-Barre.

The Attorney General's Office has obtained an arrest warrant for Frazier, who is considered a fugitive, according to the news release.

12/20/2016

Drug charges filed against shooting victim

sscinto@citizensvoice.com

Police have filed drug charges against a man who was injured in a shooting earlier this month.

Kenneth Powell, 30, survived a shooting outside his East Spring Street home in the early hours of Dec. 8, but Nanticoke police Chief Thomas Wall said the investigation of that incident led authorities to file charges against Powell.

"It was obvious that there was an extreme odor of marijuana emitting from the residence," Wall said.

Police secured and executed a search warrant at the residence and found "large amounts of marijuana and cash," inside, Wall said.

“Based on those observations warrants were issued for (Powell’s) arrest,” he said.

Powell was shot on Dec. 8 after he confronted an unidentified male who had broken into his home, according to police reports.

A fight ensued outside the home and the suspect pulled out a pistol and shot Powell in the back. Wall said at the time that the bullet exited near Powell’s stomach and he was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center for surgery.

The suspected shooter has not been arrested.

Powell will face charges of manufacturing with the intent to deliver, conspiracy to manufacture with the intent to deliver, possession of drug paraphernalia and related counts.

A preliminary hearing had not been scheduled as of Monday evening.

12/15/2016

Nanticoke police arrest pair for drug possession

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

A search warrant led police to arrest two men for drug possession.

Nanticoke police searched an apartment at 215 E. Ridge St. Tuesday around 4:45 p.m. after a confidential informant contacted resident Justin Healey about a drug transaction. Officers found Healey and Jeffrey Seiwel in the residence and detained them while searching the home.

Police said they found 20 empty heroin bags in the garbage, two hypodermic needles, two bags of heroin, a metal spoon with residue and empty suboxone packages. Seiwel had five heroin bags and \$700 in cash in his possession, police said.

Police also said they found \$80 on Seiwel that had been used to purchase heroin from him earlier that day.

Seiwel and Healey were taken to county prison for overnight arraignment on charges of conspiracy to possess a controlled substance, intent to deliver and related counts.

12/15/2016

Three suspects arrested in alleged purse snatching

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

Police arrested two men and charged a third for allegedly stealing the purse of a 72-year-old woman in a grocery store parking lot last month.

Police said Justin Healey, 22, and Richard Vanorden, 39, both of Nanticoke, and Johnathan “Jonny” Healey of Scranton “conspired” to steal the woman’s purse on Nov. 30 in the Weis parking lot around 5:35 p.m.

The woman told police that after finishing her shopping that night and getting into her car, a man opened the front passenger door of her vehicle and grabbed her purse. The man then ran away toward the Luzerne County Community College and Geisinger buildings.

Investigators said the Healeys and Vanorden conspired to steal from the woman. Johnathan Healey snatched the bag while Vanorden distracted the victim, police said. Justin Healey and Vanorden were arrested on Tuesday and taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility for overnight arraignment. Police issued a summons on theft charges for Johnathan Healey.

12/15/2016

District attorney’s office: Nanticoke man will enter plea in rape case

ggibbons@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man is set to plead to charges in an alleged rape case after waiving his preliminary hearing on Wednesday, according to the Luzerne County District Attorney’s Office.

Christopher Bates, 43, faces charges of rape, indecent deviant sexual intercourse and aggravated assault. Charges of terroristic threats, unlawful restraint and reckless endangerment were withdrawn.

“He agreed to a plea agreement,” Assistant District Attorney Cara Solimine said. “And we think that will be the next action in this case.”

According to a police report: A woman reported being ordered around at knifepoint by Bates and forced into sexual acts. Bates threatened the life of the woman and refused to allow her or her son to leave a residence.

District Judge Donald Whittaker changed the status of Bates’ bail from \$250,000 straight bail to 10 percent of that

figure. Despite the bail modification, Bates remained at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Wednesday evening.

12/8/2016

Shooting in Nanticoke early Thursday morning leaves one injured

tkellar@timesleader.com

A scuffle after a suspect allegedly tried to break into a residence led to gunfire and one man being shot early Thursday morning.

Chief Thomas Wall said officers responded to a residence in the first block of Spring Street at 2:37 a.m. for a report of shots fired.

Wall said an investigation showed that the suspect, attempted to kick in the door of the residence when an altercation ensued with the resident.

Top Searches

The alleged altercation spilled out into the street, where the suspect and the victim began to fight. Wall said a gun was produced by the suspect, and two shots were fired — one hit the victim and the back and hit the residence, and the second missed the victim but also hit the residence.

Wall said the victim was transported to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center for emergency surgery, and is currently recovering. The condition of the victim is not currently available.

One of the slugs allegedly fired by suspect was recovered by a Pennsylvania State Police R&I unit, and the firearm was found at the scene, according to Wall.

Wall also said officers are reviewing video cameras in the area and have conducted interviews with witnesses.

Anyone with information on the alleged shooting is asked to contact the Nanticoke Police Department at 570-735-2200.

12/6/2016

Chilling details of prison guard's killing revealed in filing

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Bob Kalinowski, staff writer, contributed to this story.

Chilling details revealed for the first time in a court filing Monday paint the slaying of correctional officer Eric Williams as a cold, calculated episode and not a sudden act of anger.

Midway through Williams' brutal stabbing death, gang assassin Jessie Con-ui paused his attack to walk to a shower, rinse a cut on his hand and wrap the wound in a shirt before returning to continue stabbing the guard in his face, head and upper body, prosecutors alleged in documents filed Monday.

When it was over, the convicted killer reached into Williams' pocket as the Nanticoke native lay dying in a pool of blood at U.S. Penitentiary at Canaan and removed a piece of gum, then sat down to chew it, according to the filing.

Con-ui, 39, is slated to stand trial in April over the February 2013 attack on Williams, who prosecutors say Con-ui kicked down a flight of stairs before beating and slashing him to death with a pair of shanks because he was angry over a cell search.

Con-ui's attorneys have not disputed he was responsible for the attack, which was caught on video. They are, however, fighting prosecutors' efforts to put Con-ui to death by arguing poor treatment by prison guards caused him to snap.

As part of that effort, they are seeking to prevent jurors from seeing the "graphic and disturbing" video, which depicts an attack that lasts nine minutes and then shows Williams lying "barely alive" for 22 more minutes until other guards arrive on the scene.

But in a filing Monday, prosecutors say they have the right to present the evidence they choose and that only the video — as well as another video of the cell search and contraband seizure that Con-ui claims led to the stabbing — will convey to jurors the brutality of the attack.

"All of the evidence that the defendant seeks to exclude is the strongest evidence linking Con-ui to the murder," prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney's Office wrote. "The fact that the defendant's attack was brutal and vicious should not act as an evidentiary shield that protects him from the truth."

Williams' father, Don, said the family had already been informed about the disturbing contents of the video. He said the defense's attempt to keep the footage out of trial is "absurd."

"It's a major piece of evidence," he said. "It not only shows the murder, but shows the savagery and brutality of the murder."

According to a synopsis of the video included in the filing, the recording captures Con-ui “lying in wait” on the second floor of the cell block, already armed with the shanks he uses in the attack. Con-ui watches Williams walk toward the stairs, then heads toward the guard in a “casual and unthreatening manner” before delivering a surprise kick to Williams’ face, knocking him down the stairs, prosecutors wrote.

Con-ui then “frantically” chases after Williams to stop him from calling for help, pinning Williams to the ground and taking his radio away, prosecutors said.

Con-ui proceeds to repeatedly hit and stab Williams in the face, head and upper body, cutting his own hand in the process, the filing says.

Con-ui walks over to a shower to wash the wound, which he then wraps in his own shirt, before returning to continue stabbing Williams, prosecutors say.

The video, which is black-and-white, shows Con-ui “stomping on and kicking a defenseless and prostrate” Williams, as well as slamming his head on the concrete floor, prosecutors say.

Afterward, Con-ui took some gum from Williams’ pocket and sat down at a table to chew a stick as Williams lay on the floor dying after being stabbed more than 200 times, according to the filing.

After throwing Williams’ radio at the guard’s head and once more kicking him in the face, Con-ui returns to his cell and closes the door, according to prosecutors.

The video goes on to show other officers finding Williams lying in a pool of blood and following the blood trail to Con-ui’s cell door, prosecutors said.

Showing the video, prosecutors argue, will back-up the testimony of other officers who heard Con-ui’s “admissions and asserted justifications” for the attack on Williams.

A federal judge has not yet ruled on the defense motion related to the video.

Con-ui’s defense is also seeking to reduce the number of aggravating factors prosecutors can cite when seeking the death penalty and to limit victim-impact evidence only to members of Williams’ family.

Prosecutors counter in the filing Monday that court rules do not limit victim-impact statements to family and that the aggravating factors they are seeking to cite are proper.

They are seeking to portray Con-ui as a dangerous criminal who, as part of his initiation into the Arizona Mexican Mafia, lured a gang member who had fallen out of favor with gang leadership to a Phoenix laundromat in 2002 and shot him four times in the head.

Con-ui’s violent past also includes attacks on other inmates and participation in a conspiracy to commit “multiple murders,” including that of a law enforcement officer in 2003, prosecutors say.

In 2009, Con-ui threatened another guard at U.S. Penitentiary Victorville, in California, telling a guard who searched his cell to “watch who you are (expletive) with, before you get hurt,” according to prosecutors.

Con-ui remains imprisoned at ADX Florence, the supermaximum security prison in Colorado where he is serving 25 years to life for the 2002 murder.

12/5/2016

Police Blotter

Citizens Voice

Police arrested two people wanted by the Nanticoke Police Department around 11:11 a.m. on Sunday in the CVS parking lot. Raymond Delaney, 26, of Shickshinny, and Lacey Hules, 26, of Nanticoke, were both wanted on drug charges, police said. They were transferred into the custody of the Nanticoke City Police Department.

12/2/2016

Nanticoke police: Woman alerted bystanders to robbery by honking car horn

Times Leader staff

City police are asking residents to be especially cautious while shopping during the holiday season, noting a woman was robbed outside a store Wednesday evening.

A 72-year-old city resident reported to police that after she finished grocery shopping at the Weis supermarket, 1 Weis Plaza, a man opened the front passenger door of her vehicle and grabbed her purse.

Witnesses described the suspect as a white man, of average height, thin, and wearing a ball cap and jacket with a Pittsburgh Steelers logo. The suspect ran toward the nearby Luzerne County Community College and Geisinger buildings.

The woman alerted bystanders by honking her car horn.

Police ask that anyone who observed the man in the area, or who may have knowledge of his identity, contact detectives at 570-735-2200, ext. 216.

11/21/2016

Police: man assaulted female relative

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

A city man who was previously charged with rape assaulted a female relative by making sexual advances on her despite her refusals, police said.

Glynn A. Wildoner faces charges of indecent assault and solicitation after police said he went to a female relative's apartment on Friday around 4 p.m. and tried to have sex with her against her wishes. Police said he told the alleged victim rape charges against him from a June 16 arrest involving two minors were recently dropped before his sexual advances started.

The Citizens' Voice does not identify victims of sexual assault.

The alleged victim said Wildoner put his hands down her pants several times despite her yelling at him to stop. She told police she had to physically remove Wildoner's hand from her pants at which point Wildoner offered her \$100 for sex. She made an excuse to get away from Wildoner and contacted authorities, police said.

Wildoner was out on bail from the June 16 arrest, police said. In that case, he is facing child rape charges alleging he forced himself on a 14-year-old girl and tried to have sex with the girl's sister.

He was arraigned on Friday before Magisterial District Judge Whittaker and sent to Luzerne County Prison to await a preliminary hearing.

11.18.2016

Judge rules Nanticoke man qualifies as a 'sexually violent predator'

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man convicted of abducting complete strangers and bringing them to remote cemeteries, where he raped them at knife-point, qualifies as a sexually violent predator, a judge ruled Thursday.

Michael Foschini, 27, of 328 W. Main St., Nanticoke, previously pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated assault, kidnapping and rape in three cases, including for shooting a prostitute in the head and snatching up two other women he drove to secluded Plymouth Township cemeteries before brutally raping them.

"In my 15 years of doing this job, Mr. Foschini is without question the most dangerous individual I've ever had to prosecute," Assistant District Attorney Nancy Violi said after the hearing. "I think that there's no question that he absolutely is a sexually violent predator."

The designation will impact the type of sex-offender treatment Foschini receives and the notification the community receives when he is eventually released after serving his 24- to 48-year prison sentence, she said.

Police caught Foschini after a prostitute was shot in the head Dec. 12, 2014. The woman survived and told police Foschini picked her up at Academy Street and Carey Avenue and drove her to an abandoned building on Willow Street, where they got into an argument about money. During the fight, Foschini kicked her out of his car and shot her in the head, according to prosecutors.

After arresting Foschini, police collected his DNA, which would later come back as a match for two unsolved rapes. In the first, Foschini pulled a knife and kidnapped a woman from Carey Avenue in Wilkes-Barre and drove to Exaltation of the Holy Cross and St. Joseph's Cemetery in Plymouth Township, where he raped her, according to prosecutors.

Foschini was also charged in a second cold-case sexual assault from Nov. 16, 2012, in which he lured a woman he saw on Academy Street in Wilkes-Barre into his SUV with an offer to smoke marijuana. Instead, Foschini locked her in the car and drove to Ebert Cemetery in Plymouth Township, where he held a knife to the woman while he raped her in the back seat.

Foschini's DNA also matched a third unsolved sexual assault case, but the victim declined to testify in that case, prosecutors said.

During a hearing Thursday, Paula Brust, a member of the Pennsylvania Sexual Offenders Assessment Board, testified that she did not believe Foschini could ever be rehabilitated.

"He has shown a pattern of behavior of violent crimes," Brust said, noting that personality disorders generally appear in

early adulthood. “I do believe this is a chronic, lifetime disorder for Mr. Foschini.”

Defense attorney Janan Tallo argued that Foschini was a young man at the time of the crimes and said she believed he could eventually “see the error of his ways and change.”

Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas, however, sided with the prosecution and concluded Foschini suffers from a “mental abnormality” that qualifies him as a sexually violent predator.

“His behavior is predatory in nature,” Lupas said.

The judge ordered Foschini to be returned to State Correctional Institution Retreat as soon as possible to continue serving his sentence.



11/17/2016

Police seek shoplifter wearing Nanticoke sweatshirt

COURTESY OF STATE POLICE

Authorities are looking for two people they say stole items from Cabela’s in Tilden Township on Oct. 9.

Photo: N/A, License: N/A, Created: 2016:10:14 12:25:56 COURTESY OF STATE POLICE

TILDEN TWP. — State police in Berks County are searching for a retail theft suspect with possible ties to Luzerne County. A man wearing a sweatshirt that read “Nanticoke Football” is one of four people who stole items from the Cabela’s retail store in Tilden Township near Hamburg at about 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 9, according to state police at Hamburg.

Store security officers attempted to apprehend the man and his accomplices but they drove off in a white Chevrolet Blazer that was later found abandoned in a nearby parking lot with stolen items inside the vehicle, police said.

Police on Wednesday released surveillance video footage of the man and a woman who is also suspected in the alleged crime.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Trooper Brian Cipko, PSP-Hamburg Criminal Investigations Unit, at 610-562- 6885.

11/14/2016

Nanticoke man facing multiple charges after alleged rape

sscinto@citizensvoice.com

A city man attacked and raped a woman at knifepoint over the weekend, police said.

Christopher Bates, 43, of Nanticoke, faces charges of rape, terroristic threats, false imprisonment and harassment after an alleged victim reported he forced her to have sex with him and threatened her with a knife early Saturday morning. The Citizens’ Voice does not identify victims of sexual assault.

According to arrest papers, Bates went after the woman while she was sleeping around 2 a.m. on Saturday and punched her in the face. Once she woke up, police said Bates duct taped her mouth shut. When she struggled, police said Bates pulled out a knife.

Bates forced the alleged victim into the bathroom and made her strip off her clothes and have sex with him. Police said he made her stay naked afterward and threatened to slash her throat with the knife.

After Bates forced her into sex again, police said Bates offered her three options — he would either kill her, kill himself

or let her leave with her son. Police said Bates then held the knife to the alleged victim's genital area. Bates forced the woman into sex a third time before allowing her to get dressed, police said. He then refused to let her out of the bedroom, according to arrest papers. Police said Bates eventually allowed the woman and her son to go downstairs but would not let them leave the house. Bates then packed his belongings and left, police said. A preliminary was scheduled for Nov. 27 at 1 p.m. before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker, according to arrest papers.

11/12/2016

Search warrant leads to three suspects facing drug charges

tkellar@timesleader.com

A search warrant executed by police and members of the Luzerne County Drug Task Force resulted in three arrests. Marie McDaniels, 34, Nicholas McManus, 21, and Celso Sanchez, 24, all of Nanticoke, are all facing a slew of charges after investigators served the warrant at a residence at 1 Rock St. in Glen Lyon. Officials said the warrant was executed at approximately 6 p.m. Wednesday. Along with members of the Drug Task Force, police from Newport Township and Nanticoke were present. As a result of the search, investigators allegedly found a digital scale, \$175 in cash, an assortment of drug paraphernalia, 39 white bags containing suspected heroin and brass knuckles. McDaniels is charged with one count each of possession with intent to deliver and criminal conspiracy, three counts of possession of a controlled substance, four counts of possession of drug paraphernalia and one count of possession of a small amount of marijuana. McManus is charged with one count each of possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, criminal conspiracy, possession of a controlled substance, possession of a small amount of marijuana and four counts of possession of drug paraphernalia. Sanchez is charged with two counts each of possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, criminal conspiracy, possession of a controlled substance and four counts of possession of drug paraphernalia. Court documents indicate the suspects were arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Michael Dotzel Thursday, and are scheduled for preliminary hearings before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker at 1:15 p.m. Nov. 30. McDaniels, McManus and Sanchez were each jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of bail. A photo of McDaniels was not immediately available.

11/2/2016

Teen accused in ambulance theft, assault sentenced

jdolinsky@timesleader.com

A teen accused of assaulting a man with a brick then leading police on a chase in a stolen ambulance last year was sentenced to two years probation after pleading no contest Friday to some of the charges. Destiny Noella McNeil, 19, of Nanticoke, entered the plea on a single felony count each of theft, fleeing, and simple assault. Twelve additional charges, including two counts of aggravated assault, were withdrawn in exchange for her plea, court record show. McNeil was immediately sentenced to serve two years probation under supervision of the Luzerne County Specialty Court team, which monitors and treats otherwise prison-bound offenders with documented mental health illnesses. Moosic-based psychiatrist Dr. Matthew Berger testified at a hearing in July that McNeil suffers from auditory and visual hallucinations that caused her to believe she saw "demon shadows," factors that led him to diagnose her with schizophrenia. Berger had indicated the "voices" in her head had subdued, but "mild paranoid thoughts" remain. Prosecutors say McNeil on Sept. 4, 2015, struck Timothy Yatsko with a brick on East State Street, Nanticoke, before fleeing in an ambulance parked about a block away. The girl allegedly led police on a pursuit and eventually crashed the emergency vehicle in Laurel Run, causing damage along the way. McNeil was ordered to pay \$45,116 in restitution to insurer Gladfelter Claims Management. She is to have no contact with Yatsko. According to the affidavit, McNeil hit Yatsko hard enough to cause him to fall to the ground. The teen then fled in the emergency vehicle, hitting two parked cars on East State Street before making her way to Route 29 and eventually

Interstate 81 north.

McNeil then made her way to Route 309, pursued by both Nanticoke and Wilkes-Barre Township police, where she struck a township cruiser near the border between Wilkes-Barre Township and Laurel Run, the affidavit says. While being pursued, McNeil, who was driving without a license, crashed on Northampton Street in Laurel Run. Wilkes-Barre Township Patrolman Robert Capparell said she eventually “spun out,” realizing she didn’t have anywhere to go. She was then apprehended

11/1/2016

Wilkes-Barre man allegedly lied while trying to buy gun

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Wilkes-Barre man is charged with making a straw purchase of a firearm from a Nanticoke gun shop, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.Z

Ruben Rosario, 19, is charged with making false statements to a federally licensed firearms dealer. Prosecutors allege that Rosario lied while trying to buy a gun from Piestrak’s Gun Shop in Nanticoke on April 5. Rosario has reached a plea agreement with prosecutors and will plead guilty at a later date, prosecutors said. Rosario faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine, prosecutors said.

10/20/2016

Nanticoke armed robbery case headed to higher court, 1 suspect still at large

Local, Nanticoke

smocarsky@timesleader.com

A man who allegedly confessed to robbing a convenience store in February to feed his heroin addiction waived armed robbery and other charges to higher court Wednesday, while his alleged accomplice remains at large. John Kania III, 23, of Hanover Township, appeared before District Judge Donald Whittaker for a preliminary hearing on three felony counts of robbery, a felony count of conspiracy, and one misdemeanor count each of simple assault, terroristic threats and theft by unlawful taking.

Two robbery counts and the terroristic threat charge were withdrawn, and the remaining charges were forwarded to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

According to court papers, Nanticoke police investigated the report of a robbery at the Turkey Hill Minit Mart at 460 W. Main St. that occurred at about 11:30 p.m. Feb. 15. The clerk told police a man walked into the store “completely bundled up” and almost immediately pulled a switchblade out of his pocket and “demanded all the money or else.” The clerk told police the man ran from the store toward Alden Road, adding that the man appeared to be “disturbed or under the influence of something.” The clerk told police he was “in fear for his life.”

Responding officers observed footprints in the snow, which they followed to the north side of West Union Street, just before a dirt alley, and crossed the road to a spot from which it appeared a vehicle recently pulled away. On July 23, Nanticoke Detective Capt. Robert Lehman received a call from Kingston police officer Robert Miller, who told him he had intelligence that Kania and Daniel Blessing were involved in a recent robbery at a Nanticoke convenience store.

Lehman asked Miller, with whom he worked previously on other investigations, for assistance, and Kania allegedly agreed to a videotaped interview with Miller at the Kingston Police Department.

In the interview, Kania allegedly confessed to the armed robbery, which he planned with Blessing. Kania said the two planned to use the stolen money to buy heroin. Kania allegedly said Blessing parked his car on a roadway off Alden Road while Kania went and robbed the store.

Kania allegedly told police he received about \$120 from the store clerk, and he and Blessing split the money and used it to buy heroin, which they then used.

Kania was arraigned before Whittaker and has been in jail awaiting his preliminary hearing since August. Whittaker set his bail at \$75,000, and Kania was returned to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility to wait his formal arraignment before Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley at 10 a.m. Jan. 5.

Following Wednesday’s hearing, Lehman said Blessing, 22, of Mountain Top, remains at large. He is believed to be in the Philadelphia area, Lehman said.

Anyone with information on Blessing’s whereabouts is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200.

10/15/2016

Former Wyoming Valley Country Club general manager pleads guilty to theft

jdolinsky@timesleader.com

The former manager of the Wyoming Valley Country Club in Hanover Township pleaded guilty Friday in Luzerne County Court to stealing funds from the private golf course.

Randy Park, 39, of Sunset View Drive, Nanticoke, entered the plea to a single count of theft before Luzerne County Judge Michael T. Vough. The judge ordered the former club general manager to pay \$30,000 in restitution.

State police said Park made unauthorized transactions in excess of \$2,000 between January 2013 and December 2014 via a debit card no one at the club knew he had obtained, as well as through cash withdrawals, checks written to himself and failure to pay for medical insurance.

Park, hired in 2012 at \$80,000 per year, was suspended in 2014 following an internal audit and terminated Jan. 23, 2015.

Park was ordered to have no contact with the club. He is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 20.

9/9/2016

W-B man charged in theft from Nanticoke high school

sscinto@citizensvoice.com

Police arrested a Wilkes-Barre man on Wednesday for his alleged involvement in a 2015 burglary at Greater Nanticoke Area High School.

Wilkes-Barre City police apprehended Alberto Carlos Matias on Wednesday after a previously arrested juvenile named Matias as his “co-conspirator,” in the robbery of more than \$5,000 in cash, a computer, an overhead projector and several checks from the high school in January 2015, according to a criminal complaint.

The juvenile told police that Matias called him on January 26, 2015 and asked if he wanted to make \$800. The juvenile agreed and Matias picked him up near his home. In the car, Matias said they were going to “rob” Nanticoke High School, according to police.

After stopping at Matias’s home for supplies, the juvenile said the pair walked to the high school from a nearby CVS parking lot. Police said Matias directed the juvenile to break into the window of Room 112 and retrieve a lockbox from the cabinet. They used a drill to break the window, went inside and retrieved the lockbox containing “a few hundred dollars” in bank checks.

Police said Matias broke into a second room and took envelopes of cash from a teacher’s desk and a laptop computer. Police said the same classroom was burglarized the next day and an overhead projector was dismantled from the ceiling. Matias was charged with burglary, criminal conspiracy, theft by unlawful taking, corruption of minors and related counts.

He was being held in Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$250,000 bail, awaiting a preliminary hearing scheduled for 1 p.m. Sept. 14 before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

9/1/2016

Couple charged with leaving two kids alone in car at Nanticoke gym

emark@citizensvoice.com

City police on Wednesday charged a Mountain Top couple with child endangerment for allegedly leaving their children alone in a car in front of a Nanticoke gym.

Police allege that Molly O’Neill, 35, and Daniel Johnson, 36, left a 5-month-old girl and an 11-year-old boy in a car outside Nanticoke Fitness Center as the couple worked out on the night of June 29.

Officers responding to an anonymous tip found the infant asleep in a car seat and the 11-year-old boy playing with an iPad, with the car doors locked, according to a criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police.

They coaxed the boy to open a car door, which set off an alarm. He said his mother, O’Neill, was exercising in the gym, the complaint states.

O’Neill told police that she left her infant daughter in the care of her son while she worked out, and she had rigged the car doors so an alarm would sound if they opened, according to the complaint.

Police contacted Luzerne County Children and Youth Services, and a caseworker interviewed O’Neill and Johnson — the father of the infant — on July 7, the complaint states. They said they went to the gym together and left the children

in the car “for about 10 minutes” while they exercised, the complaint states.

Police interviewed the boy, who said his mother has left him alone in the car to care for the baby several times, at the gym or supermarket, according to the complaint.

The boy’s natural father told police his son had been left alone to care for the infant at least twice. He also said his son had been diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, a form of autism, the complaint states.

O’Neill and Johnson, both of the Valley Stream Park development, were charged with endangering the welfare of children, a first-degree misdemeanor.

They were arraigned Wednesday before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker and released on \$25,000 unsecured bail, pending a preliminary hearing scheduled for Sept. 7 before Whittaker.

Bob Kalinowski, staff writer, contributed to this report.

August 23, 2016

K-9 Vice Has Died



It is with deep regret that the members of the Nanticoke City Police Department announce the unexpected passing of our K-9 partner Vice. He will be truly missed by all.

8/17/2016

Nanticoke Police Chief William Shultz has died

bedmunds@timesleader.com

Residents offered condolences and prayers on social media Wednesday evening after hearing of the passing of police Chief William Shultz.

In a post on its Facebook page, the Nanticoke Police Department announced the death of Shultz, who passed away Wednesday morning after battling pancreatic cancer.

According to the post, Shultz had been a police officer since 1973, when he joined the Plymouth Township Police Department. He was hired by Nanticoke in 1990 and was appointed chief in August 2012.

Comments on the post called the chief a gentleman and a friend. People thanked Shultz for his service, calling him “a cop’s cop” and an “all around good guy.”

Funeral arrangements and an obituary have not yet been released.

8/17/2016

Nanticoke police chief dies

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

As the city’s top cop, police Chief William Shultz continued serving as a lead investigator for the city’s most notable cases and hit the streets alongside younger officers to battle crime.

“He insisted on that. It was welcomed because of his 42 years of experience. He was a cop first, and an administrator second, but they both complemented each other,” Nanticoke police Capt. Robert Lehman recalled Wednesday.

That leadership and mentoring will be missed, colleagues say, as Shultz died Wednesday morning after a long battle with cancer. He was 61.

Even after being diagnosed with cancer, Shultz played an active role in steering the department forward and worked until he could work no more, they say.

“He had the weight of the citizens on his shoulders here. They came first,” Lehman said.

Shultz served as Nanticoke police chief since June 2012, and was in his 26th year of service to the department. Prior to being hired by Nanticoke in 1990, Shultz served in the Plymouth Township Police Department for 16 years, including nine years as chief.

Lehman said he often turned to Shultz for help when he assumed Shultz’s former position as Plymouth Township police

chief in 1995, a post he held until the department disbanded in 2004.

“I wasn’t from the area when I was hired there. He sort of was my mentor. He was right across the river. He was my go-to guy. He was vital to every investigation I had over there. I was the youngest police chief in the county at the time. I was 26,” Lehman said.

Lehman would later follow Shultz to Nanticoke’s police force in 2006.

“He was a father figure to his peers and the new guys who came aboard,” Lehman said. “He was sick for a long time, but it’s still a shock.”

The mood around the department and city was “somber” and “solemn” over the loss of the longtime public servant, Lehman said.

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski said he would miss Shultz not only as a police chief, but as a friend.

“It’s a sad day for the police department and the city of Nanticoke,” he said.

Wiaterowski recalled how Shultz would often stop into his office and settle into a reclining chair for long chats about the department and other, more personal matters. He’d put his feet up, showing off his cowboy boots, and would always wear his “famous fedora hat,” the mayor said

“I’m going to miss him sitting in that chair,” Wiaterowski said.

Shultz served as chief of police since 2012 and Wiaterowski took office in 2014. The mayor said Shultz will leave behind an example of a “hands-on” police chief.

“He’d eat, sleep and drink police work,” Wiaterowski said. “He was very fair. He would take a phone call any time of the night. Those are the things that I think are going to be his legacy.”

Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis said she had been in regular contact with Shultz and his family during his battle with cancer. She said he will be remembered as a man with two loves in life: his family and his police work.

“He was very passionate about his job. He loved being chief. Every time you spoke to him, it just showed,” Salavantis said. “That community has lost an amazing man. It’s very emotional for everybody. We lost a good guy. He was just a big part of our law enforcement family. He will be greatly missed.”

8/8/2016

Police seek assistance in locating co-conspirator in armed robbery case

ggibbons@timesleader.com

A Hanover Township man wanted in connection with an armed robbery of Turkey Hill Minit Mart, West Main Street, Nanticoke on February 15, was arrested on Friday evening.

John Kania, 22, was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker and remanded to Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$150,000 bail.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for August 10.

City detectives were assisted by Kingston Borough Police Department in the investigation.

Kania’s alleged co-conspirator Daniel Blessing, 22, remains at large.

Police are requesting anyone with information about Blessing’s whereabouts to contact Nanticoke City Detective’s at 570-735-2200, etc. 206.

8/7/2016

Nanticoke police make arrests in two armed robbery cases

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

City police have announced arrests in two armed robbery cases in Nanticoke.

Police on Friday charged Joshua Ruchinski, of West Nanticoke, with robbery, theft and simple assault. Ruchinski robbed a Shickshinny man he met for a purported sale of comic books on Thursday, police allege.

The alleged victim told police that Ruchinski pulled out a knife and demanded money as the two men sat in a car parked in front of a Slope Street home where Ruchinski said the comic books were stored, police said in a criminal complaint.

When the man resisted, Ruchinski pulled out a gun and again demanded money, according to the complaint. The man continued to resist, so Ruchinski grabbed the man’s car keys and cellphone and ran off, the complaint states.

Ruchinski, 26, was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker and sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Wednesday.

Police also charged John Kania III, 23, of Hanover Township, with robbery, terroristic threats, theft and simple assault

in connection with the armed robbery of the Turkey Hill Minit Market on West Main Street on Feb. 15. Kania walked into the store, pulled out a switchblade knife and demanded cash from a cashier, police allege. Kania confessed to the crime when police interviewed him in late July after receiving a tip from Kingston police that Kania might have been involved in the robbery, according to a criminal complaint. Kania said he had a serious heroin addiction at the time and robbed the store to get money to buy the drug, the complaint states. He was arraigned before Whittaker and sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$150,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Wednesday.

8/6/2016

Police nab suspected drug dealer in Nanticoke

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Police raided a city home and arrested an alleged drug dealer Thursday.

Police officers from Nanticoke, Wilkes-Barre and Kingston as well as the Luzerne County Drug Task Force and the state Attorney General's Office executed a search warrant at 263 State St. in Nanticoke on Thursday, according to police.

Officers found Robert Dixon III, as well as his girlfriend and a child in the home, police said. The woman and child were released.

According to police, Dixon told officers that all of the drugs in the house were his, and that there was a handgun in his bedroom that belonged to someone else.

Officers found numerous bags of suspected cocaine and marijuana, water bongs, marijuana pipes and a digital scale during the search, according to police. They also located the handgun Dixon had mentioned and found it was loaded, police said.

Dixon, 28, was charged with possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

He was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker and sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 bail.

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

8/5/2016

Nanticoke police seek suspect in armed robbery

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

A West Nanticoke man robbed a man when the two met to buy and sell comic books on Thursday, according to Nanticoke police.

A Shickshinny man told police he drove to Nanticoke on Thursday afternoon to buy comic books from a man he knew as "Josh," police said. The man said he and "Josh" connected through Craigslist, a classified advertisements website. Police identified "Josh" as Joshua Ruchinski, 26.

The man said he met Ruchinski in a convenience store parking lot. Ruchinski got into the man's vehicle and asked him to drive to a Slope Street home where he said the comic books were stored, according to police.

When the men reached the home, Ruchinski pulled out a knife and demanded the man hand over cash, police said. The Shickshinny man resisted, suffering a cut on his hand. Ruchinski then pulled out a handgun and again demanded money, but the man continued to resist, according to police.

Ruchinski grabbed the man's cellphone and car keys before running away, police said.

The victim received injuries to his left hand and neck.

Ruchinski is described as a white male, 6 feet tall and 150 pounds, with a tattoo on the left side of his neck.

Anyone with information about Ruchinski is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200 or dial 911. Ruchinski should not be approached as he is considered armed and dangerous, police said.

8/4/2016

Prosecutors seek transfer of teen accused of stealing ambulance to jail

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

The teen charged as an adult with hitting a man with a brick and stealing an ambulance should be housed along with

other alleged adult offenders at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, county prosecutors argued Wednesday. Destiny McNeil, 18, is charged with aggravated assault and other offenses after allegedly smashing a brick into the back of the neck of an unsuspecting victim and then stealing an ambulance, which she used to lead authorities on a high-speed chase through crowded streets before police ran her off the road.

Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley on Friday rejected a defense motion to have McNeil — who has a troubled past and suffers from paranoid schizophrenia — tried in juvenile court. The judge noted in her ruling that McNeil has had numerous chances to get better, yet she continues to offend in violent ways.

In a motion filed Wednesday, Assistant District Attorney Mamie Phillips seeks to have McNeil transferred from the Northampton County Juvenile Justice Center — where she has been held with bail set at \$25,000 — to the county jail here.

The transfer would be consistent with Gartley's recent order, Phillips argues.

After striking the man with a brick, McNeil is accused of stealing an ambulance parked on East State Street in Nanticoke in September while its crew was inside a home helping a patient.

McNeil then sped off, driving erratically and hitting parked cars in a neighborhood crowded with children, according to prosecutors.

After leading officers on a chase, police eventually forced her off the road in the foothills of Giant's Despair in Laurel Run, prosecutors said.

A trial date for McNeil has not been set.

8/3/2016

Teen accused of stealing ambulance will be tried as an adult

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Citing an extensive history of delinquency, behavioral issues and mental health problems, a county judge has ruled a Nanticoke teen accused of hitting a man with a brick and stealing an ambulance will stand trial as an adult.

In an 18-page opinion distributed Tuesday, Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley ruled Destiny McNeil, now 18, will stand trial as an adult on aggravated assault and theft charges alleging she hit a man on the back of the neck with a brick before stealing an ambulance parked on East State Street in Nanticoke in September while its crew was inside a home helping a patient.

Her attorneys sought to have the case tried in juvenile court, arguing that she was hospitalized the day before the theft because she was "experiencing bizarre hallucinations, hearing voices and engaging in unsafe behaviors."

Prosecutors, however, fought to try McNeil, a repeat offender with a history of disciplinary issues, as an adult.

In her ruling, Gartley noted that McNeil's actions endangered the community and that she was able to describe her actions "articulately and clearly" to police after being caught.

"The defendant has a long history of mental health treatment and various diagnosis, ongoing criminal behavior, school issues, placement write-ups all demonstrating a continued threat to the community and the public that she will engage in behavior similar in nature in the future," Gartley wrote.

During a hearing last month, Dr. Matthew A. Berger testified for the defense that McNeil, who has paranoid schizophrenia, should remain in the juvenile system so she could get the best treatment options. However, he was unfamiliar with the treatment options in either the adult or juvenile systems, the judge noted in her opinion.

But a prosecution expert psychologist, Steven E. Samuel, testified that he while agreed McNeil suffers from paranoid schizophrenia — which can be treated by medication, her anti-social personality disorder can not be treated. That, combined with her psychotic symptoms, puts her at high risk of re-offending, he testified.

Samuel also argued there was not adequate time to properly treat McNeil in the juvenile system and that State Correctional Institution Muncy offers a program for youthful offenders that could help.

Gartley's opinion notes that McNeil has a history of juvenile delinquency including offenses of arson, disorderly conduct, criminal mischief, simple assault and harassment. McNeil has been treated at a number of facilities, the judge wrote, "all to no avail."

Despite all McNeil's prior treatment, she is still accused of sneaking into a garage and bashing an unsuspecting man on the back of the neck with a brick before stealing an ambulance, Gartley wrote. Once in the vehicle, McNeil is accused of speeding erratically, hitting parked cars in a neighborhood crowded with children and leading officers on a chase before police eventually forced her off the road in the foothills of Giant's Despair in Laurel Run, according to the judge.

The judge found McNeil, who is now an adult, deserves to be tried as one.

"The dispositional alternatives offered under the juvenile system, just over two years, are not sufficient to provide the

long term supervision that is required by the defendant that will provide the necessary rehabilitation,” Gartley wrote. No trial date has been set.

8/1/2016

Dozens gather to support law enforcement at Nanticoke vigil

sscinto@citizensvoice.com

As the sun began to set, it came time to light the candles on Patriot Square.

Dozens of people attending a vigil for fallen police officers Sunday night set to work as a slow song played. Some produced lighters from their pockets and helped those around them light thin white candles protected by cups encircled with a blue and black ribbon.

The pinpricks of flame spread around the square as those gathered shared a moment of silence at a vigil organized to honor fallen officers in the local area and around the country in recent months.

“I’m so glad they’re having this,” said 92-year-old Nanticoke resident Doris Merrill. “It’s really needed.”

Nanticoke resident Meagan Walters organized the vigil because she wanted to give the community a chance to show their support of their police departments and officers.

“Right now our police officers are very down on themselves,” she said. “They needed positive reinforcement.”

Walters said interest in the vigil grew as soon as the community got wind of what she was planning.

“When the community found out, everybody got behind it,” she said.

Nearly 100 people made their way to Patriot Square to stand with their neighbors and hold a candle while local church leaders led prayers for law enforcement.

Denise Sopko of Nanticoke came to the vigil to support the officers she said she sees in the Nanticoke community every day.

“It’s about community,” she said. “Without a police department, we don’t have a community ... we have a great team here.”

Rebecca Seman of Nanticoke hoped Sunday’s vigil, with city residents rallying around law enforcement, would set an example for other communities.

“Just look at this place,” she said, gesturing toward the crowd.

7/29/2016

Nanticoke police seek information about Meadowcrest Drive robbery

Citizens Voice

Police are seeking information regarding a robbery that took place in the 100 block of Meadowcrest Drive the night of July 13.

According to a police report:

At approximately 11:30 p.m., a man parked his car when returning to his home and was met by two white men in his driveway. The two men, one of which possessed a larger kitchen-type knife, immediately assaulted him, at which time the man received cuts on his leg. Afterward, and during a second short struggle, one of the suspects stole \$420 from the man.

After the robbery, both men ran southwest toward the Hanover Section of Nanticoke City.

Both men are described as white and of average height and build. One of the men had medium-length brown hair. Both men were wearing shorts and one was wearing a sweatshirt. The knife was described as a silver kitchen-type knife, about seven to 10 inches long.

During the course of the investigation, detectives came to the conclusion the robbery was not a random act.

City police ask anyone with information about the robbery to contact Nanticoke City Detectives at 570-735-2200 ext. 206.

7/25/2016

Warrior Run man accused of violating PFA order

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Warrior Run man is accused of violating a restraining order after showing up drunk at a his ex-girlfriend’s house and trying to get some children there to leave with him, according to police.

Vernon L. Lundin, 41, of 369 Hanover St., is charged with a single misdemeanor count of violating a protection-from-abuse order.

Nanticoke police allege he arrived at a home at 224 E. Church St. about 10:05 p.m. Saturday drunk and telling the children there to get their blankets so they could spend the night with him. His ex-girlfriend, Justina Lee, refused to let the children leave with Lundin, who began arguing with her and called her a “whore,” according to police. Lee reported that Lundin had been texting her all week saying he loves her and wanted to work things out, police said. Magisterial District Judge Donald L. Whittaker arraigned Lundin on Sunday and ordered him jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility with bail set at \$25,000.

7/23/2016

Nanticoke man faces assault charges

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A city man is facing aggravated assault charges after allegedly choking a woman during a domestic dispute early Friday, according to police.

Michael John Hoover, 44, of 304 E. Church St., is accused of threatening — in front of police — to kill the woman and another person present during the altercation.

According to a police affidavit, officers were dispatched to 18 E. Broad St. at about 1:40 a.m. to a report of a domestic fight. Officers arrived to find Michele Yaskiewicz screaming for them to remove Hoover from the property. Police said Hoover came to the apartment in an attempt to get his house key back from Yaskiewicz and instead got into a dispute with her. Hoover began choking Yaskiewicz before punching her on the left side of the face, according to police.

Yaskiewicz then bit Hoover’s left ear in self-defense causing it to bleed, police said.

Hoover threatened to kill Yaskiewicz throughout the ordeal and told officers he planned to kill Yaskiewicz and the home’s resident when he gets out of jail, according to police.

Police charged Hoover with aggravated assault, attempted simple assault, making terroristic threats, disorderly conduct and harassment.

Magisterial District Judge Joseph D. Spagnuolo Jr. arraigned Hoover on Friday morning and ordered him jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility with bail set at \$100,000.

A preliminary hearing was set for July 27.

7/21/2016

Police arrest five in connection with thefts in Nanticoke, Hanover Township

mmizenko@timesleader.com

Five people have been charged in connection with a string of thefts in Nanticoke and Hanover Township.

City police say surveillance footage identified Tyler Jonathan Williams, 19, of Wilkes-Barre Township, and Donald Jason Kinney, 19, of Newport Township, as the individuals who burglarized a residence in the 300 block of East Washington Street on July 10.

The stolen property from the 300 block of East Washington Street was later recovered in the 200 block of Welles Street, police said.

Police say the Welles Street home also contained property from five other burglaries, including three at Parkway Storage, Hanover Township, a construction site on Dundee Road, Hanover Township, and a home on East Ridge Street, Nanticoke.

A second search warrant served at 206 Welles St. in Nanticoke, resulted in the seizure of cash, marijuana and a stolen handgun, as well as the arrest of three people:

- Jaime Saldana, 37, for burglary and related offenses, including receiving stolen property.
- Barbara Saldana, 43, for receiving stolen property.
- Jaime Saldana Jr., 19, for drug related offenses, including possession with the intent to deliver.

The three Saldanas were arraigned with both males being incarcerated for lack of \$150,000 cash bail. Barbara was released on \$15,000 bail.

Williams was arraigned and incarcerated for lack of \$25,000 cash bail. Kinney was incarcerated for lack of \$75,000 cash bail.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled for Aug. 17 in front of District Judge Donald Whittaker.

Police say the investigation is ongoing and that they expect to make other arrests.

7/15/2016

Prosecutors seek to have teen charged in ambulance theft tried as an adult

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

County prosecutors are seeking to limit a psychiatrist's testimony at an upcoming hearing to determine whether a Nanticoke teen charged with attacking a man with a brick and stealing an ambulance will be tried as an adult. In a filing Thursday, Assistant District Attorney Mamie Phillips argues that a report Kingston-based Dr. Richard Fischbein authored about his findings after assessing Destiny McNeil exceeds his expertise in some areas. Phillips argues that the report indicates Fischbein plans to explain that the impact of McNeil's actions on the victims is significant, although he has not evaluated them and is not qualified to offer expertise in the area of victim impact. Fischbein is similarly not qualified to discuss the impact on the community, and he incorrectly asserts in the report that "fortunately there was only one victim," Phillips wrote. Based on the report, prosecutors also believe Fischbein will testify about an insanity defense, she wrote. Such a theory would be improperly raised at a transfer hearing and should be reserved for trial, Phillips argues. The filing seeks a hearing to determine the admissibility of the testimony Fischbein is expected to deliver at the transfer hearing, which is set for Tuesday. McNeil, who was 17 at the time of the Sept. 4 incident, is charged as an adult with aggravated assault, theft, receiving stolen property, criminal trespass and fleeing police in connection with allegedly hitting a man on the back of the head with a brick in the 100 block of East State Street in Nanticoke before stealing a Trans-Med ambulance. After leading police on a miles-long chase, McNeil was eventually forced off the road by a police cruiser in the foothills of Giant's Despair in Laurel Run. Her attorneys, Cheryl A. Sobeski-Reedy and John Donovan, are seeking to have her tried as a minor, arguing she has been diagnosed with a psychosis that has her suffering from auditory and visual hallucinations.

6/25/2016

Nanticoke man sentenced for sex with minor

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man who traveled to a Glen Lyon residence to have sex with a 15-year-old boy will spend at least five years in state prison. Richard Perugino, 61, of 1361 Hanover St., will serve five to 10 years in prison, Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley ruled. Perugino was sentenced on a charge of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse with a minor. Police said the boy's older sister caught the two involved in sex acts in July 2015, and that the boy's older brother pinned Perugino down until Newport Township police arrived. According to the criminal complaint, Perugino told police that he met the juvenile male through an iPhone application called Hornet, which allows bisexual people to interact online. The boy told police he invited Perugino to come to the house for sex. Police said Perugino knew the boy was only 15 years old.

6/24/2016

61 computers stolen from Nanticoke High School

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Police are investigating a reported burglary at Greater Nanticoke Area High School early Thursday morning during which 61 computers were stolen. Someone broke into two classrooms on the west side of the building by breaking a classroom window, police said in a news release. The suspect or suspects took 30 laptop computers from each classroom as well as one desktop computer, police said. The total value of the stolen items was \$30,750, according to police. The burglary happened overnight Wednesday into Thursday and was reported at about 7:30 a.m. Thursday, police said. Officers recovered evidence left at the crime scene, including an article of clothing and a pair of copper pliers, according to police.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200, ext. 206 or dial 911.

6/24/2016

Police: Over \$30,000 in computers stolen from Greater Nanticoke High School

tkellar@timesleader.com - @TL_Kellar - 570-991-6389

Over \$30,000 in computers were stolen from Greater Nanticoke High School on Thursday, according to police. Police said that at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, officers were dispatched to the school on Kosciuszko Street for a report of a burglary that happened sometime overnight.

Police said someone had broken into two separate classrooms by breaking the classrooms' windows, with 30 laptop computers taken from each classroom. A desktop computer was also taken from one of the classrooms.

The total value of the theft is \$30,750, according to police.

Police recovered several pieces of evidence from the scene, including a piece of clothing and a pair of pliers.

Police said more information about the computers will be released once an inventory is completed.

Police have asked anyone with information is to contact the detectives at the Nanticoke City Police Department at 570-735-2200, ext. 206.

6/17/2016

Nanticoke man charged with sexually assaulting teen, attempting to assault another

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A city man is facing child rape charges alleging he forced himself on a 14-year-old girl and tried to have sex with the girl's sister.

Glynn A. Wildoner Jr., 36, of 223 W. Union St., is charged with three counts each of forcible rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault and child endangerment, along with four counts each of unlawful contact with a minor, corruption of minors and indecent assault.

According to a police affidavit, officers were dispatched to the East Noble Street Apartments on Thursday afternoon to a report of a sexual assault. The girl's mother reported she unlocked her daughter's bedroom door and found the teen on the floor with her pants down and Wildoner on top of her.

The girl told police she had been trying to take a nap when Wildoner woke her by putting his hand over her mouth, saying "stay the (expletive) down," according to the affidavit. Wildoner forced himself on the teen, warning that he would hurt her if she told anyone, police said.

When the girl's mother came in, Wildoner claimed the teen had been masturbating, police said.

The girl reported that Wildoner had raped her before, also threatening to hurt her if she told anyone, according to police.

The teen's sister also reported that a few months ago, Wildoner tried to pressure her into having sex but she refused and Wildoner stopped, warning her not to tell anyone, police said.

Magisterial District Judge Joseph D. Zola arraigned Wildoner on Friday morning and ordered him jailed with bail set at \$100,000.

Wildoner was being held at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility with a preliminary hearing set for June 29.

6/10/2016

Hit-and-run driver damages gate at LCCC

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

A hit-and-run driver damaged a gate at Luzerne County Community College early Thursday morning, according to Nanticoke police.Z

The incident happened at about 12:20 a.m. Thursday at the upper entrance to the community college on South Prospect Street, police said in a news release.

Surveillance video footage indicates that the driver of a Toyota Corolla traveling on South Prospect Street ran off the road, struck a gate, then turned around and drove off, police said.

The Corolla, from the 2003 to 2008 generation of the model, will likely have significant front end damage, according to police.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200 or dial 911.

5/27/2016

Nanticoke man charged with child rape

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

City police on Friday accused a man of raping an 8-year-old girl multiple times.

Michael L. Sansone is facing charges of rape of a child, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse of a child, aggravated indecent assault of a child, unlawful contact with a minor, endangering the welfare of children and corruption of minors. Nanticoke police took the 29-year-old into custody Friday morning and hauled him before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker for arraignment.

Whittaker ordered Sansone to be jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility. The judge set bail at \$250,000.

Arrest papers say Sansone, last known to live on Broad Street in Nanticoke, had sexually assaulted the girl several times in the past year.

Investigators say the girl recently told a friend about the sexual abuse during a sleepover.

During interviews with authorities, the girl said Sansone forced himself on her several times and tried to make her perform sex acts on him.

He warned her not to tell anyone, arrest papers say.

At one point, the girl's 10-year-old brother walked in on Sansone having sex with the girl, police said.

Sansone ordered the boy to leave the room and demanded that the boy "keep it a secret," arrest papers say.

Later, Sansone approached the boy and offered to buy him two Lego sets if he didn't tell anyone what he saw, police said.

A preliminary hearing was set for June 8 at 1 p.m. in front of Whittaker.

5/24/2016

Federal, state authorities raid Nanticoke business

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Federal agents on Tuesday raided a sporting goods store that was once implicated in the illegal sale of restricted weapons overseas to buyers with connections to drug trafficking, espionage and terrorism.

Agents from Homeland Security and Pennsylvania State Police lined up nearly a dozen sport utility vehicles outside D&R Sports Center at 620 Fairchild St. on Tuesday morning. Agents were seen removing boxes marked "evidence" as well as rifle cartridges from the store.

An official for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement confirmed a federal search warrant was being executed, but declined further comment. A spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to comment.

Khaalid Walls, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, confirmed a criminal investigation was under way but declined to elaborate.

"Homeland Security Investigations special agents executed a search warrant (Tuesday) in an ongoing criminal investigation," Walls said. "The documents related to the investigation are under seal in federal court so we are unable to more elaborate at this time. Officers and agents with the Pennsylvania State Police and the U.S. Department of Commerce were on scene (Tuesday) and are assisting in the ongoing probe."

Federal agents previously raided the business — owned by Mark Komoroski, his brother and his father — in November 2006. In that instance, federal prosecutors alleged the business illegally sold and shipped \$247,854 of restricted items — rifles and related devices such as optics — to Russia, Kuwait, Germany and Japan without required export licenses.

Court documents filed in that case alleged money transfers to D&R for some purchases linked the store with "companies and individuals that the United States government has determined pose an unacceptable risk of being involved with or providing ... support to international narcotics trafficking, crimes against humanity/war crimes and/or terrorism."

The application for the search warrant in that case identified Russian gun runner Viktor Bout, who helped provide weapons to Liberian dictator Charles Taylor, rebel groups in Rwanda, and the Taliban.

Prosecutors in that case charged Komoroski, the business, longtime customer Sergey Korznikov and his business, Tactica Ltd., with conspiracy to defraud the U.S. According to federal prosecutors, the Moscow-based Tactica Ltd. had an affiliation with an elite counterterrorism unit controlled by the Russian Federal Security Service, formerly known as the KGB.

Court records show Komoroski pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced in July 2010 to 32 months in prison followed by two years of supervised release.

Komoroski, who served his time at the Federal Correctional Institution at Fort Dix, N.J., was released on Dec. 13, 2012. Korznikov, who also pleaded guilty, was sentenced to six months in prison followed by two years of supervised release. U.S. District Judge Edwin M. Kosik dismissed the charges against both businesses, court records show. Following that incident, D&R lost its firearms license, but remained open selling other items.

5/24/2016

Feds raid D&R Sports Center in Nanticoke

tkellar@timesleader.com - jdolinsky@timesleader.com

Federal customs agents and state law enforcement personnel have raided a local sporting goods store first implicated more than 10 years ago in the illegal sale of military equipment to a Russian front company alleged to have ties to an international arms dealer.

Officials at the scene confirmed agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations are serving a search warrant at D&R Sports Center, located at 620 Fairchild St., but referred further questions to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, which declined to comment. Pennsylvania State Police were also at the scene earlier in the day, but HSI agents declined to say what other agencies were involved.

Investigators were seen going in and out of the building, carrying bags and boxes clearly marked "evidence." At least one customer was turned away when he attempted to enter the business, but officials did allow a UPS delivery person to enter the store.

At one point, an elderly man entered the store and appeared to be upset. The man then appeared to push one of the investigators while inside the store, and raised voices could be heard for a short time. The man then left the store and declined to speak to reporters.

Previous run-ins with law

According to the Times Leader's archives, Mark Komoroski, then the owner of D&R, was sentenced in 2010 to 32 months in federal prison for conspiring to illegally export military equipment, including rifle scopes and face shields, to Russia. Komoroski later claimed on appeal that he didn't know he was required to have a special license to export the rifle scopes.

Komoroski's co-defendant, a Russian national named Sergey Korznikov, was sentenced to six months in prison for his role in the alleged conspiracy.

D&R, which records state has exported about \$2.5 million worth of goods since June 2000, was the subject of a routine inspection in 2005 by officials with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives that stemmed from an unrelated investigation into illegal firearms transactions.

Records show officials discovered a purchase order for night vision and thermal-imaging devices from a Moscow, Russia-based company that listed Korznikov as its president. Komoroski, records show, related to officials that he believed the store had been doing business with "Russian Special Forces"; business documents included the name of a counter-terrorism unit controlled by the former KGB.

Several wire transfers going into the business' account were identified as coming from Rockman EOOD and Ibrahim Hajji, both deemed excluded parties by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, which enforces trade sanctions. Court documents indicate Rockman was owned by Sergey Bout, brother of Russian arms dealer and former KGB major Victor Bout.

According to court documents, Victor Bout and "his numerous shell companies around Eastern Europe and the world were also identified as significant participants in providing weapons" to Liberian dictator Charles Taylor, rebel groups in Rwanda and the Taliban.

A family business

Court records show Mark Komoroski, 53, is the son of Donald Komoroski, who became a partner in the business in 1958, a decade after the sporting goods wholesaler/retailer was founded. Donald Komoroski's sons, Theodore and Mark Komoroski, managed store locations in Bloomsburg and Nanticoke respectively, records show.

Court records indicate ownership of the Nanticoke storefront was transferred in 2005 from Donald Komoroski to Komoroski Realty.

According to Bureau of Prisons records, Mark Komoroski was released from prison in December 2012. His wife, Lecia Komoroski, continued to operate the business during his incarceration, according to published reports. According to previous Times Leader reports, the business was forced to forfeit its Federal Firearms License as a result of the criminal case.

5/22/2016

Scam, burglary reported at Nanticoke home

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

City police warn residents to beware of con artists posing as contractors after a burglary at a Nanticoke home on Friday. A Welles Street homeowner told police that two men solicited him to seal his driveway on Friday. After the men finished the work, they tried to triple the amount agreed upon for the job, the homeowner said, according to a news release from Nanticoke police.

The homeowner paid the original price and then left his house for about two hours, he said. When he returned he found that someone had burglarized his home and stolen about \$800 in cash, along with evidence to suggest that the two men who sealed the driveway later broke into the home, police said.

The suspects are described as Hispanic males about 5 feet 9 inches to 5 feet 10 inches tall, with medium builds. They drove a white four-door pickup truck with equipment to seal driveways in the truck bed.

The descriptions of the alleged con artists and their vehicle match those of the suspects in a similar crime in West Pittston on Thursday. Police did not state whether they believe the crimes are connected.

Nanticoke police advise city residents to turn away people who appear at their homes to solicit work.

Contractors and anyone soliciting work in Nanticoke must be registered with the city, police said.

Anyone with information about Friday's burglary in Nanticoke is asked to call city police at 570-735-2200 or dial 911.

5/20/2016

Nanticoke Turkey Hill robbed on Saturday

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

City police report an armed robbery at a Nanticoke convenience store early Saturday morning.

The robbery happened at 4:29 a.m. Saturday at the Turkey Hill Minit Market on West Main Street, police said in a news release.

A store clerk reported that a person who appeared to be female entered the store and demanded cash and a pack of Newport 100 cigarettes. The suspect kept her hand in her pocket, indicating she had a weapon, the clerk said.

After the clerk handed over cash and cigarettes, the suspect fled the store in an unknown direction, police said.

The suspect was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, black pants, a white flat-brimmed hat, a purple and white bandana, purple gloves and black shoes with white trim.

Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200 or dial 911.

5/11/2016

3 face burglary, stalking charges

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Three men face burglary and stalking charges after they allegedly threatened the family and damaged the vehicle of a man who owed them money for a drug debt.

Ramon Antenioencavncion, 20, Enrique Bacilio, 19, and Alberto Matias, 20, all of Wilkes-Barre, were arraigned Tuesday on felony counts of trespassing and criminal trespass and misdemeanor counts of stalking, simple assault, reckless endangerment, criminal mischief and disorderly conduct.

The three went to a home on Apollo Circle on Saturday in search of a man who allegedly owed them \$200 for a heroin purchase, according to a criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police.

They threatened a family member of the man they were searching for, and said they would be back for their money on Monday and if they did not get it "they would not care who they had to hurt or kill," the criminal complaint states.

At about 5:30 p.m. Monday, police responded to the Apollo Circle address after a neighbor reported that several men caused a disturbance and damaged a vehicle parked nearby. Officers found a vehicle with all four tires slashed and its windshield smashed, that was registered to the man who allegedly owed money for drugs.

The suspects fled in a silver Honda, according to witnesses. Newport Township police pulled over the vehicle and detained five occupants, police said. The men provided false and conflicting information about their identities, so police took them to the state police barracks at Shickshinny, where a scan of their fingerprints confirmed their identities, according to the complaint.

Each man denied participating in the crime and refused to cooperate with police, the complaint states. Preliminary hearings are scheduled for May 18 before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

5/6/2016

Police: Two men charged with Nanticoke armed robbery demanded money, drugs

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Two men face robbery and related charges after they allegedly threatened the residents of a Nanticoke home and took money at gunpoint early Thursday morning.

A criminal complaint filed by Nanticoke police identifies the men as Reynaldo Melendez, 27, of Rochester, New York, and his uncle Richard Vanorden, 39, of Nanticoke.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police responded to a reported armed robbery at an East Washington Street home at 2:47 a.m. Thursday. A male resident said that Vanorden called him earlier, looking to buy marijuana, but the man told him he had none to sell.

Vanorden and Melendez came to the home, threatened two people who live there and demanded drugs and money, the complaint states. The residents said they knew Vanorden and knew Melendez as "Ray Ray."

Melendez told the residents he would shoot them and their children if they did not give him money and drugs, according to the complaint.

The residents pointed to \$57 in cash on a television stand, which Melendez took, the complaint states. Melendez also grabbed the man's phone and broke it as he and Vanorden left, police said.

Vanorden and Melendez got into a fight when they returned to Vanorden's home, and a neighbor called 911, according to the complaint. Police responded and questioned Vanorden's girlfriend, who told officers she drove Vanorden and Melendez to the East Washington Street home.

She also turned over the weapon Melendez allegedly used during the robbery, which officers determined was a BB gun, police said.

Officers interviewed Vanorden but Melendez refused to cooperate, according to the complaint. Melendez injured his face when placed in a holding cell, in an attempt to accuse officers of misconduct, the complaint states.

Vanorden and Melendez were arraigned Thursday on felony counts of robbery and criminal conspiracy and misdemeanor counts of theft by unlawful taking, simple assault and terroristic threats. They were sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$150,000 bail apiece.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled for May 18 before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

5/5/2016

Grand jury indicts Nanticoke man on firearms charges

Citizens Voice

A grand jury indicted a Nanticoke man Tuesday for an illegal firearms purchase.

Authorities said Damone Whitley, 22, of Nanticoke, falsely indicated he was buying two firearms from a gun shop for himself on April 5 when he was buying them for other people.

A federal grand jury in Scranton indicted Whitley with making false statements to a federally licensed firearms dealer. If found guilty, Whitley could face a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, supervised release following imprisonment and a fine.

4/21/2016

Police: Toddler and baby left alone in van outside liquor store

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

City police charged two people with child endangerment for allegedly leaving a toddler and a baby unattended in a vehicle while they were in a liquor store on Wednesday.

John Britton, 27, and Danielle McKeel, 26, both of Nanticoke, were arraigned Wednesday on charges of endangering the welfare of children and leaving unattended children in a motor vehicle. They were sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 bail apiece.

In a criminal complaint, police said that officers observed a man and a woman, later identified as Britton and McKeel, leave a Dodge Caravan in the parking lot of Weis Plaza and go into a Wine and Spirits store at about 12:30 p.m. The pair "seemed to be acting suspiciously" in the van before they went into the store, police said.

After several minutes, officers investigated and found two young children — a 2-year-old and a 9-month-old — unattended in the van, according to the complaint. Britton and McKeel told police they had just gone into the store briefly to pay someone, the complaint states. Police arrested Britton and McKeel and placed the children in protective custody with children and youth services.

4/15/2016

Nanticoke man to serve up to 48 years in prison for sexual assault

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man convicted of molesting a 5-year-old girl was sentenced Friday to serve up to 48 years in prison, according to prosecutors.

William Charles Wunner, 30, of Nanticoke, was convicted by a jury in January on eight charges, including rape of a child, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse with a child, aggravated indecent assault of a child and endangering the welfare of a child.

Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas on Friday sentenced Wunner to 24 to 48 years in prison and ordered him to register as a sex offender for life.

“We are pleased with the sentence,” Assistant District Attorney Nancy Violi said after the hearing. “His actions have forever changed this little girl’s life. Hopefully he thinks about that in the decades to come.”

Wilkes-Barre police arrested Wunner in August 2014 after the girl’s grandmother reported the child pulled away while she was helping the girl get dressed. When the grandmother asked what was wrong, the girl began to shake and said somebody would kill her if she told. The grandmother assured her she was safe and the girl told her Wunner had sexually assaulted and raped her, according to prosecutors.

Wunner sought and failed to tell jurors about what he termed “sexual activity” between his 5-year-old victim and her brother. He claimed the girl’s mother targeted him for prosecution because he was living with another woman. Following sentencing, Wunner was remanded to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

4/8/2016

Alleged ambulance thief must wait to learn whether she’ll face charges as an adult

jdolinsky@timesleader.com

An 18-year-old girl accused of attacking a man with a brick before leading police on a chase in a stolen ambulance will continue to wait as to whether she’ll face a slew of charges as an adult.

A status conference held Thursday in Luzerne County Court revealed prosecutors are awaiting reciprocal discovery in the case resulting in their inability to begin engaging the services of an expert witness. Despite a judge’s order, specific requests for materials from the defense have yet to be received by the Commonwealth as of Thursday, prosecutors said. The holdup drew the ire of Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley.

“I’m not happy,” the judge said. “This is about to be a contempt of court against the public defender’s office.”

A prior motion requests a hearing for decertification of the charges against Destiny McNeil and their transfer to juvenile court. Defense attorneys previously said mental health professionals diagnosed the girl with serious mental health issues and determined she should not be held criminally liable for her actions.

Prosecutors say McNeil on Sept. 4 struck a man with a brick on East State Street, Nanticoke, before fleeing in an ambulance parked about a block away. The girl allegedly led police on a pursuit and eventually crashed the emergency vehicle, causing damage along the way.

Gartley denied the defense’s request to have McNeil moved to a treatment wing in the Northampton County detention center where the teen is currently located.

The judge scheduled another status conference for April 29.

4/6/2016

Trespassing check leads to marijuana arrest in Nanticoke

Times Leader

A 29-year-old man was charged in connection with two counts possession of marijuana when police discovered him and another person inside a vehicle parked in a no trespassing lot Saturday.

According to police, officers observed two males sitting in the front seat of a red 2006 Hyundai Elantra. When officers

approached the vehicle, they noticed the smell of marijuana.

Through Pennsylvania license check, police were able to identify the passenger as Eric Matthew Parsons. The male in the driver's seat told police he had smoked earlier in the day but didn't drive to the location or drive the car at all. He also would not identify himself to police.

The officers then searched the interior of the vehicle, which was not licensed to either of the offending parties.

Found within the vehicle were:

- a backpack which had the wallet and license of the driver, identified as Joshua Michael Kehres, a multi-colored glass pipe, metal grinder, plastic baggy containing marijuana, two heroin packets and a plastic bag containing trace amounts of meth
- a black backpack, owned by Parsons, which contained a hypodermic needle
- a marijuana blunt

Kehres was taken to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on two counts of possession of a controlled substance, one count of possession of a small amount of marijuana, one count possession of drug paraphernalia and one count of trespassing.

4/4/2016

Man gets up to 48 years for shooting prostitute, raping two other women

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Michael Foschini looked down with a blank expression as he stood in shackles listening to his victims describe what he did to them.

Foschini, 26, of 328 W. Main St., Nanticoke, previously admitted to shooting a prostitute in the head and abducting two other women who he drove to secluded Plymouth Township cemeteries and raped at knife-point.

With the tables turned and Foschini the one being held captive, the women on Monday tearfully described how their brutal ordeals had changed their lives, from their ability to go outside to their relationships with their families.

"Now I'm afraid of everything and everybody. I have a hard time leaving the house," one victim said. "I'm not able to be the grandmother I should be right now."

The other rape victim urged the judge to impose a stiff sentence.

"I'm a prisoner in my own home," she said. "I think that he needs to do his time. He deserves it. He deserves what he gets."

Foschini, who was surrounded by a large contingent of family and friends in court, offered only a brief apology for his actions before Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas sent him to state prison for 24 to 48 years.

"I just want to apologize," Foschini said.

Foschini previously pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated assault, kidnapping and rape in three cases that police tied together after a prostitute was shot Dec. 12, 2014.

The woman told police a man, whom she later identified as Foschini, picked her up at Academy Street and Carey Avenue and drove her to an abandoned building on Willow Street, where they got into an argument about money.

During the fight, Foschini kicked her out of his car and shot her in the head, according to prosecutors.

Police arrested Foschini several days later and collected a DNA sample that matched samples taken in three unsolved sexual assault cases.

Prosecutors charged Foschini in the Dec. 13, 2011 rape of a woman who reported being abducted at knife-point from Carey Avenue in Wilkes-Barre and driven to Exaltation of the Holy Cross and St. Joseph's Cemetery in Plymouth Township, where he raped her.

Foschini was also charged in a second cold-case sex assault from Nov. 16, 2012, in which he lured a woman he saw on Academy Street in Wilkes-Barre into his SUV with an offer to smoke marijuana. Instead, Foschini locked her in the car and drove to Ebert Cemetery in Plymouth Township, where he held a knife to the woman while he raped her in the back seat.

Foschini's DNA also matched a third unsolved sexual assault case, but the victim has left the area and prosecutors say they are no longer pursuing that case.

In court Monday, defense attorney Joseph F. Sklarosky Sr. said Foschini was "profusely apologetic" for his conduct.

Foschini's conduct was the result of drug abuse and hanging with the wrong crowd, he said.

"He admits that openly, your honor, and he is sorry for the people he hurt," Sklarosky said. "He intends to straighten out his life."

Lupas also heard from several of Foschini's friends and relatives whose descriptions of his character were at stark odds

with the crimes he admitted. They characterized him as a “good man” who helps with chores and is “always respectful.” The judge noted the descriptions Foschini’s loved ones offered were “far different” from the accounts of the victims. He imposed consecutive prison time, as prosecutors requested, for a total of 24 to 48 years in state prison. Foschini, who won’t be eligible for parole until he’s 50, will also be required to pay the costs of prosecution and to register as a sex offender for life.

“I think (the sentence is) very appropriate given the horrific nature of the offenses,” Assistant District Attorney Nancy Violi said after the hearing. “I think it’s a sentence that’s going to protect everybody out there from this person. ... I’ve been doing this a long time and the brutal nature of what he did to these women, it’s really shocking.”

4/4/2016

Foschini sentenced to 24 to 48 years for kidnappings, rapes and shooting

jdolinsky@timesleader.com

A serial rapist’s sobbing victim on Monday described the damaging effects left on her in the wake of a vicious sexual assault.

“In my nightmare,” the victim said, “I wake up and see his face.”

Michael Angelo Foschini Jr. was stoic in Luzerne County Court as two of his victims described their personal trauma from separate incidents in which prosecutors say the Nanticoke man coerced them into his vehicle, drove them to isolated cemeteries and threatened to slit their throats or stab them if they didn’t give in to his demands.

A second tearful victim said the attack strained her relationship with her family and left her in a constant state of fear.

“I’m afraid of everything and everybody,” she said, choking back tears. “I’m not able to be the grandmother I should be right now because I’m afraid and ashamed. He’s taken me away from my family.”

For his actions, Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas sentenced Foschini, 26, to 24 to 48 years in state prison for the 2011 and 2012 rape and kidnapping of the two women as well as on charges stemming from a 2014 attack on a third female who Foschini shot in the head after a dispute over cash. Foschini previously pleaded guilty to the charges.

Assistant District Attorney Nancy Violi called the rapes “the worst a person can imagine happening to a woman.”

“The brutal nature of what he did to these women, it’s really shocking,” Violi said outside the courtroom.

State police said the victim from 2012 claimed Foschini drove her to a Plymouth Township cemetery on Nov. 16, 2012, where he threatened her with a knife and forced her to perform oral sex on him before he raped her. The victim told police Foschini made her tell him she liked being raped. He then drove off and left the victim alone in the cemetery.

Foschini was charged in July on similar allegations he abducted and then raped a woman at knifepoint in another Plymouth Township cemetery on Dec. 13, 2011. The victim told investigators Foschini told her he knew where she lived and not to call the police.

Police connected Foschini to the rapes, which had been unsolved, when they got a match to DNA evidence taken from him during a previous investigation into a Wilkes-Barre shooting in which Foschini shot a woman in the head with a .22-caliber rifle in the area of Willow Street and Gordon Avenue on Dec. 12, 2014. The two had been arguing over money, police said.

While some supporters on Monday described Foschini as “helpful” and “always respectful,” Foschini himself offered only a brief acknowledgement of regret.

“I just want to apologize,” a shackled Foschini said.

Defense attorney Joseph F. Sklarosky Sr. said Foschini was “profusely apologetic” for those he’d hurt, but noted Foschini had “fallen into the trap of many young people” who wind up doing drugs and getting into trouble.

“He’s prepared to pay society back for what he’s done,” Sklarosky said.

3/25/2016

Nanticoke man pleads guilty to 9 robbery, theft cases

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man accused in a theft and robbery spree pleaded guilty in nine cases Thursday and was immediately sentenced to eight to 16 years in prison.

Douglas Johnson, 54, was accused of a host of crimes, including robbing a Wells Fargo Bank in Exeter in October 2014 and the botched armed robbery of the Plains Meat Market the same day.

In the bank robbery, Johnson was accused of entering the branch on Wyoming Avenue and passing a note that read, “Place all the money on the counter, no dye packs, no trackers, no one gets hurt.”

The teller refused, and Johnson fled, empty-handed, police said.

The same day, Johnson and another man robbed the meat market by holding a box cutter to the owner's side, according to police. When the owner yelled for an employee, the robbers fled, police said.

Four days after those robbery attempts, Johnson assisted in a purse snatching in Ashley, according to prosecutors. Police alleged an accomplice grabbed the purse from an elderly woman and Johnson drove the get-away vehicle. In addition to three felony robbery charges, Johnson pleaded guilty to three counts each of theft and receiving stolen property.

Some of the allegations against Johnson have included stealing a car from a Wyoming Borough dealership and running a chop shop.

Luzerne County Judge Michael T. Vough on Thursday ordered Johnson to serve eight to 16 years in prison on all the offenses, with a restitution amount to be determined.

Johnson was ordered shipped to state prison as soon as possible.

3/22/2016

Man who shot prostitute in head admits kidnapping and raping two others

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Already convicted of shooting a prostitute in the head, Nanticoke resident Michael Foschini on Tuesday admitted to abducting two women on separate occasions and driving them to remote cemeteries to rape them.

Foschini, 26, of 328 W. Main St., pleaded guilty to two counts each of rape and kidnapping, as well as a count of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, in two cold case rapes that were solved after police swabbed his DNA after arresting him for the shooting.

Foschini, who in January pleaded guilty to aggravated assault in the shooting, said little in court Tuesday other than to acknowledge his responsibility in two brutal rapes. Assistant District Attorney Nancy Violi detailed the crimes, telling the court how Foschini kidnapped the women at knife-point before driving them to secluded Plymouth Township cemeteries and forcing them to have sex.

When Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas asked Foschini if he admitted the allegations, he said simply, "Yes, sir." Lupas ordered Foschini to undergo a sex offender evaluation ahead of his sentencing in the three cases, set for April 4. A shackled Foschini declined to comment as sheriff's deputies escorted him from the courthouse.

The cases all came together after the Dec. 12, 2014, shooting of a prostitute. The woman showed up at Geisinger's urgent care facility in Wilkes-Barre with wounds to her head and hand.

She told police a man, whom she later identified as Foschini, picked her up at the intersection of Academy Street and Carey Avenue and drove her to an abandoned building on Willow Street, where they got into an argument about money. During the fight, Foschini kicked her out of his car and shot her, according to prosecutors.

Police arrested Foschini several days later and collected a DNA sample that prosecutors say matched samples taken in three unsolved sexual assault cases.

Prosecutors first charged Foschini in the Dec. 13, 2011 rape of a woman who reported being abducted at knife-point from Carey Avenue in Wilkes-Barre and driven to Exaltation of the Holy Cross and St. Joseph's Cemetery in Plymouth Township.

Prosecutors allege Foschini forced the woman to perform oral sex on him before having intercourse with her.

The allegations were strikingly similar to another rape on Nov. 16, 2012. In that case, prosecutors allege Foschini lured a woman into his SUV with an offer to "smoke a bowl" with her after seeing her along Academy Street, near the Crown Fried Chicken.

When she got in, Foschini locked the doors and drove the woman to Ebert Cemetery in Plymouth Township where police said he held a knife to the woman while he raped her in the back seat.

Foschini threatened to slice her throat if she didn't moan during the assault, according to police.

No charges have been filed in connection with the third sexual assault case prosecutors say they have tied to Foschini through DNA. Prosecutors have declined to comment on the case, citing an ongoing investigation.

Foschini remains jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail pending trial in the sex assault cases.

3/19/2016

W-B woman nabbed in Nanticoke drug bust

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

City police charged a Wilkes-Barre woman with drug trafficking on Friday after they served a search warrant at a Nanticoke home.

Jordan K. El, 19, was charged with possession with intent to deliver heroin, crack cocaine and marijuana, Nanticoke police said in a news release.

Her arrest resulted from a search at an Espy Street home at about 11:40 a.m., police said.

Officers found \$571 in cash, 195 bags of heroin, 4.7 grams of crack cocaine and 8.6 grams of marijuana during the search, according to police.

El was wanted by Wilkes-Barre police and is on bail for prior arrests in Hanover Township, police said.

She was going to be arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker, according to police.

Members of the Nanticoke Police Narcotics Unit, the Hanover Township Police Narcotics Unit, the Luzerne County Drug Task Force and the state Attorney General's Office participated in the investigation, police said.

3/10/2016

Three Luzerne County men charged after heroin bust

Joseph Kohut - Citizens Voice

Lackawanna County detectives accused three Luzerne County men on Tuesday of planning to sell a large amount of heroin, detectives said.

Anthony Glover, 42, 153 Reynolds St., Plymouth; Maurice Wood, 21, 226 E. Main St., Nanticoke; and Carwell T. Moody, 45, 470 S. River St., Wilkes-Barre, each face drug charges following their arrests on Kane Street in Scranton, according to a criminal complaint.

Detectives said the three arrived at a hotel at about 5 p.m. to sell a large amount of heroin.

Woods exited a vehicle and began walking to the hotel when detectives arrested him. He refused to comply with their commands, leading officers to use a stun gun, detectives wrote.

Police arrested the other two in the vehicle they arrived in and took them into custody. Glover gave a false name and detectives learned he has 14 different aliases.

Wood had tried to get rid of a plastic shopping bag, which held 88 bags of heroin and a gram of raw heroin, police said. Detectives found another gram of heroin in the vehicle.

Moody and Glover are jailed at Lackawanna County Prison in lieu of \$75,000 bail, while Wood is jailed there in lieu of \$50,000 bail. Preliminary hearings are scheduled for Thursday, March 17.

2/17/2016

Nanticoke police investigating robbery at Turkey Hill

Citizens Voice

A man wearing all black clothing robbed a Turkey Hill on West Main Street at knife point, city police said.

Nanticoke City police said a clerk reported the robbery around 11:35 p.m. Monday.

The clerk told police that a man walked into the store, pulled a switchblade out of his pocket and demanded all of the money in the register "or else." The man took the money and left, running towards Alden Road, according to the clerk. The clerk described the suspect as a white man who is 5 feet 11 inches tall, medium build and wearing all black clothing.

Officers saw footprints in the snow along the sidewalk on Alden Road and cutting through a yard in the 400 block of West Union Street and back onto the sidewalk until officers believe the suspect entered a vehicle.

The Nanticoke City Police Department is investigating the robbery. Anyone with information regarding the incident is asked to call 570-735-2200.

1/30/2016

Nanticoke man faces child pornography charges

Jacob Seibel - Citizens Voice

The Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office has charged a Nanticoke man with more than two dozen counts of child pornography after agents allegedly found images of naked children stored on his home computer.

Jon Emmett, 42, was arraigned Friday on three felony counts of disseminating photographs of child sex acts and 25 felony counts of child pornography.

He was sent to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$75,000 bail.

The investigation that led to Emmett's arrest began in June 2015, according to a criminal complaint police filed against Emmett.

According to the complaint, agents of the child predator section of the Attorney General's Office found torrent files containing child pornography downloaded to an IP address later traced to Emmett. The files allegedly contained nude images of children who appeared to be as young as 5 to 7 years old.

Agents traced the IP address to Emmett's Nanticoke home, according to the complaint. They interviewed several people close to Emmett, including a woman described as his "soon to be ex-wife."

When agents told the woman why they wanted to speak with her, she allegedly said, "Oh no, he is still doing that?" She said that years ago she had seen images of underage girls on Emmett's old computer, according to the complaint. Emmett agreed to speak with agents who contacted him via telephone. He allegedly said that he liked to view "clothed" images of juveniles, but that if he saw naked pictures of children he would delete them.

Emmett's attorney then contacted authorities to say that Emmett would not be available for a follow-up interview that had been scheduled at the Nanticoke police station, according to the complaint.

On Thursday, agents conducted a forensic analysis of the hard drive of Emmett's home computer. They allegedly recovered 20 videos and four images of apparent child pornography, some of them depicting children who appeared to be 2 to 4 years of age, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Feb. 10 before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

1/27/2016

Alleged armed hostage-taker faces trial

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

A man charged with holding a woman hostage at gunpoint and barricading himself in a Nanticoke home last fall will face a trial in county court.

Daniel Dosette, 38, was charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, resisting arrest, terroristic threats and reckless endangerment following the Nov. 21, 2015 incident. At a preliminary hearing Tuesday, Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker bound over all charges to the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas, according to court records. Police allege that Dosette held a woman hostage at gunpoint following a violent domestic dispute, and that he refused to surrender to police who surrounded the home after the woman called 911 and escaped.

Officers eventually stormed the home and took Dosette into custody, but Dosette resisted arrest and three officers were injured while police disarmed and subdued him, police allege.

Dosette's formal arraignment in county court is scheduled for March 31. He remains jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$75,000 bail, court records state.

1/20/2016

Nanticoke man enters guilty plea in prostitute shooting

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man accused of raping women at knifepoint in Plymouth Township cemeteries pleaded guilty Tuesday in a separate case alleging he shot a prostitute in the head following an argument over cash, according to prosecutors.

Michael Foschini Jr., 26, of 328 W. Main St., pleaded guilty to counts of aggravated assault, reckless endangerment and possessing about 30 grams of marijuana, Assistant District Attorney William Finnegan said. As part of his plea agreement, Foschini agreed to a sentence at the high end of the standard range of between three and six years in prison, he said.

Luzerne County Judge David W. Lupas set sentencing for 9:30 a.m. March 22.

According to prosecutors, the victim showed up at Geisinger's urgent care facility in Wilkes-Barre with wounds to the head and hand on Dec. 12, 2014.

She told police a man, whom she later identified as Foschini, picked her up at the intersection of Academy Street and Carey Avenue and drove her to an abandoned building on Willow Street, where they got into an argument about money. During the fight, Foschini kicked her out of his car and shot her, according to prosecutors.

After Foschini's arrest several days later, police collected a DNA sample from him that prosecutors say matched three sexual assault cases.

He has since been charged in two of them — the first a brutal rape from four years earlier.

The victim in that case told police she had been abducted at knifepoint from Carey Avenue in Wilkes-Barre and driven to Exaltation of the Holy Cross and St. Joseph's Cemetery in Plymouth Township on Dec. 13, 2011.

There, Foschini forced the woman to perform oral sex on him before having intercourse with her, according to prosecutors.

The allegations were startlingly similar to another violent rape prosecutors charged Foschini with a month later. In that case, Foschini is accused of luring a woman into his SUV with an offer to "smoke a bowl" with her after seeing her along Academy Street, near the Crown Fried Chicken, on Nov. 16, 2012.

When she got in, Foschini locked the doors and drove the woman to Ebert Cemetery in Plymouth Township where police said he held a knife to the woman while he raped her in the back seat.

Foschini threatened to slice her throat if she didn't moan during the assault, according to police.

No charges have been filed in connection with the third sexual assault case prosecutors say they have tied to Foschini through DNA.

Foschini remains jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail.

1/16/2016

Nanticoke man faces jail time for stalking Tracey Ann Gonda, convicted of killing her infant

jdolinsky@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man is facing potential jail time after threatening to kill a woman who was recently convicted in the suffocation death of her 2½-month-old son.

William M. Fisher, 45, was scheduled to be sentenced Friday in Luzerne County Court on charges he sent harassing text messages to Tracey Ann Gonda, including one message in which he promised to take Gonda "to the grave."

"Coming for u," Fisher wrote in a message on April 12. "U cant hide!"

Gonda, Fisher's ex-girlfriend, was sentenced in November to 15 months to five years behind bars after pleading guilty to one count each of child endangerment and corruption of minors in the Feb. 14, 2014 death of her infant son, Jaxon.

Police said Gonda, 42, fell asleep on a recliner with Jaxon in her arms and then closed the recliner on the boy after awaking several hours later.

Gonda had admitted to drinking the night Jaxon died and to lying to police about the incident during the early stages of the investigation, including how and where Jaxon's body was found.

Jaxon's father, Corey Eckrote, was sentenced to two to six years in jail on Dec. 18 for his role in the infant's death.

According to a criminal complaint, Fisher sent multiple harassing text messages to Gonda between April and May. He was previously charged with stalking in 2013, court documents show.

Police said Fisher, of 41 W. South Street, also illegally entered a Nanticoke residence on April 23 and demanded to know the whereabouts of Gonda and Eckrote. Fisher told the homeowner he was "going to kill her (and him)" before he goes to jail, the complaint alleges.

After being arrested and released on bail on criminal trespassing and related charges for the incident, Fisher again messaged Gonda.

"U cant and wont imagine the pain and hell ur goin 2 go through," Fisher wrote in the text message on May 10.

Fisher is facing one misdemeanor count each of stalking and retaliation in the incident. The penalties could result in up to seven years behind bars.

Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley on Friday granted a request to continue Fisher's sentencing to Feb. 24 to consolidate additional charges of theft, burglary, and receiving stolen property.

Fisher was remanded to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.