

12/15/2012

**A Nanticoke man was arrested at a hospital on an alleged protection from abuse order violation.**

Times Leader

Township police responded to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center at 9:18 p.m. Wednesday for a reported fight. Police said Sarena Lindsay, of Plains Township, was involved in an argument with her ex-husband, Kareem Hough, of Nanticoke, in the fourth floor hallway and that Hough punched Lindsay on the left side of her face.

Police also learned that Hough has a no-contact PFA against him from Lindsay. The PFA was confirmed and Hough was arrested for allegedly violating the order. Hough also is on probation and a detainer was issued against him as a result of getting arrested again. He was transported to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

12/13/2012

**Homicide suspect charged in fatal shooting in Wilkes-Barre**

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A suspect in three homicides in Plymouth is being charged with a fourth homicide for a fatal shooting on Jay Street, Wilkes-Barre, in July.

Shawn Hamilton, 19, originally from Philadelphia who resided in Nanticoke, is charged in the killing of Kenyatta Hughston, 22, on July 6.

Police said Hughston was shot in the head and neck and shoulder. He died Oct. 10 at a medical facility in Montgomery County.

Hamilton and his half brother, Sawud Davis, 16, are charged in the shooting deaths of three people and critically injuring a fourth person inside a Plymouth apartment on First Street on July 7.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for Hamilton in the Plymouth killings.

Investigators said Hughston was a relative to Hamilton and Davis. The night of the Plymouth fatal shootings, Hamilton and Davis allegedly visited Hughston at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Facility in Plains Township.

Hamilton was arraigned by Senior District Judge Thomas Sharkey in Wilkes-Barre. He was remanded to the county correctional facility without bail.

12/12/2012

**Police investigate cameras at Nanticoke Area**

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Authorities are investigating the installation and quick removal of cameras into the wrestling room at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School, District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis said Tuesday, though neither she nor school officials were sharing many details.

Everything started with a complaint against the wrestling program received in the past 30 days, district solicitor Vito DeLuca said, though he refused to reveal the source or specifics.

As is custom, Superintendent Anthony Perrone said he shared the complaint with the school board. Then, without informing the entire board or the superintendent, one board member, whom school officials are refusing to name, asked the school's IT staff two weeks ago to install cameras in plain view into the room where the wrestling team practices.

The district already has a camera security system in different areas of its schools.

DeLuca said the board member believed "since we have cameras everywhere anyway, what would be the harm in directing one of the staff to place cameras in the wrestling room?"

"It's not a locker room, it's not a dressing room," he said.

After two days though, an administrator ordered the removal of the cameras, DeLuca said, because the room could potentially be used by students to change clothes.

The full board, superintendent and solicitor did not find out about the new cameras until its Dec. 3 meeting, days after they had already been removed, school officials said.

"It didn't bother me because I really didn't consider it a major thing," Perrone said of not initially being informed of the decision.

After receiving complaints about the cameras, Nanticoke police and a detective from the district attorney's office came to the school following the meeting last week to see if any laws had been broken, Perrone said.

Salavantis refused to say whether law enforcement officials were looking into any specific individual and Nanticoke

police Chief Bill Shultz, who is leading the joint investigation, was unavailable Tuesday. Attempts to reach varsity wrestling coach Joe Ebert were also unsuccessful.

"Was there anything wrong? We will find that out in a couple days," after police conclude the investigation, Perrone said.

12/12/2012

### **Police Blotter**

Times Leader

A former secretary at the Luzerne County Community College's Public Safety Institute accused of stealing students' tuition payments waived her right to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Tuesday. Janet Griffith, 51, of Center Street, Nanticoke, waived three counts of theft to Luzerne County Court. Nanticoke police and county detectives allege Griffith stole \$12,213 in tuition payments for the public safety institute from February 2009 through June 2011, according to the criminal complaint.

12/6/2012

### **Three face drug charges after Ashley traffic stop**

Citizens Voice

Police arrested three men on drug charges Monday morning following a traffic stop on Main Street in Ashley. Investigators said passenger Malik J. Macon, 20, of East Main Street, Nanticoke, was caught with a "large amount" of cocaine in his shoe.

Ashley police say an officer stopped the vehicle, a 2002 Ford Taurus, around 2 a.m., detected a strong odor of marijuana and found three bags of marijuana.

After removing Macon and two others from the vehicle, police said they discovered Macon had a large amount of cocaine stuffed in his shoe.

Macon was charged with possession with the intent to deliver cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

He was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

The driver and another passenger will also face drug charges, police said.

12/5/2012

### **GNA secretary theft suspect**

#### **Jacqueline Ruchinski pocketed "\$10 here or a \$20 there" from kids' meals.**

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A secretary at Greater Nanticoke Area School District was charged Tuesday with stealing more than \$19,400 in students' payments for breakfasts and lunches.

Jacqueline M. Ruchinski, 61, of East Church Street, Nanticoke, allegedly admitted to school officials she pocketed, "\$10 here or a \$20 there" from 2006 through 2012, according to charges filed.

An audit by the state Office of Auditor General for those years allegedly found a \$19,427 shortage in the cafeteria account at the school district's Educational Center for sixth and seventh grades.

Ruchinski surrendered before District Judge Joseph Halsey where she was arraigned on six counts of theft. She was released on her own recognizance.

Ruchinski hid her face from photographers as she entered and exited the magisterial district office.

The alleged thefts by Ruchinski, a secretary in the district for 20 years, caught school officials by surprise, including Superintendent Anthony Perrone.

Perrone told investigators he was informed of the alleged thefts in a meeting with Ruchinski and Educational Center Principal Joseph Long on April 18. Ruchinski was suspended without pay after the meeting with Perrone.

Perrone said Ruchinski was well respected in the school district.

According to the criminal complaint filed by Luzerne County detectives and Nanticoke police:

Ruchinski was in charge of the Educational Center's cafeteria account and collected students' breakfast and lunch payments. When Nancy Butzek, business office secretary, asked Ruchinski about a missing \$8 deposit slip for a student's account on April 18, Ruchinski said she will need to find it.

Butzek examined Ruchinski's cafeteria report and allegedly noticed other missing deposit slips.

Butzek confronted Ruchinski about the missing slips in which Ruchinski replied in a panic, "I can fix it. Tell me when, and how much?" the complaint says.

Ruchinski offered to use her own money to correct deposit shortages and was told by Butzek she could not do that.

Butzek advised Ruchinski if she did something wrong, she needed to talk to Long.

After telling Long she allegedly stole money, Long arranged a meeting with Perrone.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Dec. 14 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

11/29/2012

**John Burton Derhammer Jr., 38, of East Broad Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned Wednesday on charges he assaulted a girlfriend**

Times Leader

Derhammer allegedly punched the woman several times and threatened to kill his mother if she called police at about 10:30 Tuesday night, according to the criminal complaint.

Derhammer was charged with simple assault, resisting arrest, terroristic threats and harassment. He was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$7,000 bail.

11/24/2012

**Pair suspected in Thanksgiving burglary at Nanticoke home**

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While families around the area were gathered for Thanksgiving dinner Thursday, police say a pair of burglars targeted homes in Nanticoke, breaking into one to swipe belongings.

They may have gotten away with the heist at 1002 S. Prospect St., but investigators were led to the suspects after hearing what sounded like a "violent domestic" dispute at an apartment down the street, police said in arrest papers.

Upon arrival at 1210-1212 S. Prospect St., police said James T. Novis, 37, and Adam J. Kuren, 28, were overheard arguing with their girlfriends - seemingly about how to get rid of stolen goods. The men were arrested when Kuren was spotted carrying a duffle bag stolen in the burglary, according to police. The girlfriends allowed investigators inside to recover the stolen items, police said.

The Thanksgiving Day break-in at 1002 S. Prospect St. occurred in a neighborhood that has recently seen a string of burglaries.

Novis, of 1212 S. Prospect St., and Kuren, of 1210 S. Prospect St., are suspects in prior burglaries in the city, Nanticoke police Chief William Shultz said Friday.

There were at least five burglaries in the city just last week.

"I believe these two are responsible for other burglaries in our community," Shultz said. "I'm not saying they're responsible for each and every one we have. We'll have to look at the evidence we got, like forensics and DNA. That stuff doesn't come back overnight."

Neighbors around 1002 S. Prospect St. said they spotted a man with neck tattoos knocking on doors on Prospect Street before seeing police respond. The homeowner said she left her property around noon and returned around 3:30 p.m. to see her house "ransacked."

Police say Kuren admitted he and Novis would knock on doors around the city and break inside if no one answered.

Police said Novis and Kuren stole various military duffle bags from 1002 S. Prospect St., items the victim was storing for her cousin while he was deployed overseas with the U.S. military. They also took a large amount of collectable coins, a 32-inch television, a DVD player and a laptop computer, police said.

Kuren told police they sold the television and laptop to a drug dealer for five bags of heroin - which local narcotics officers said has a value of about \$80.

Both men are charged with burglary, criminal trespass, conspiracy, theft and receiving stolen property.

Shultz said additional charges are expected against both men.

Novis and Kuren were taken to Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Thursday night to await overnight arraignment.

On-duty Magisterial District Judge Daniel O'Donnell arraigned the men Friday morning and ordered them jailed with bail set at \$25,000 cash.

Kuren has a lengthy criminal history that includes arrests for burglary, court records show. At the time of the crimes, he was out on bail for a burglary at 1207 S. Prospect St. in Nanticoke in August and for breaking into military vehicles at the Pennsylvania Army National Guard armory in Nanticoke in July, court records show.

State police at Shickshinny filed an arrest warrant against him Tuesday for a July 7 burglary in Hunlock Township. Novis was on probation for 12 months in connection with a February arrest in Plymouth for violating a restraining order filed by a woman. Police say he resisted arrest and then flooded the police station holding cell with urine-filled water after blocking the toilet's drain with his arrest papers.

After serving 41 days in prison following a guilty plea, he was released Nov. 14, court records show.

11/22/2012

**A man wanted for a home burglary on Perry Street in January was arraigned Wednesday.**

Times Leader

Joseph A. Klesmer, 26, of Mosier Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker on charges of burglary, criminal trespass, criminal mischief, theft, receiving stolen property, criminal attempt and identity theft. He was released on \$25,000 unsecured bail.

Police said Klesmer allegedly used stolen credit cards at Walmart in Hazle Township and several Kmart stores. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Nov. 28.

11/17/2012

**Nanticoke man sentenced on robbery, trespassing charges**

Times Leader

A Nanticoke man was sentenced Friday in Luzerne County Court on charges of robbery, unlawful restraint and trespassing.

Judge Fred Pierantoni III sentenced Benjamin J. Artache, 22, of Apollo Circle, to three to six years in state prison on charges of robbery, illegal possession of a firearm, unlawful restraint, intimidation of a witness, resisting arrest and two counts of criminal trespass.

Nanticoke police said Artache held a woman against her will inside an apartment at Apollo Circle on April 28, 2012, trespassing at the same Apollo Circle apartment on April 15, and robbing another man with a firearm inside another Apollo Circle apartment on March 7, according to court records.

11/13/2012

**Nanticoke police report home burglaries**

Times Leader

Police said they are investigating five home burglaries since Friday.

The location of the burglaries were reported in the 200 block of East Union Street, the 1000 and 1100 block of South Prospect Street, the 1200 block of south Market Street and the 200 block of West South Street.

Items stolen include televisions, jewelry, money, tools, copper tubes and vacuums.

Police said the burglaries occurred during daylight hours and night.

Anyone with information about the burglaries is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 and to call 911 to report suspicious activity.

11/8/2012

**Fired LCCC employee charged with taking \$16,000**

**Janet Griffith of Nanticoke faces hearing**

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A city woman who police say stole \$16,000 from Luzerne County Community College while working there as a secretary was charged Wednesday with related offenses.

Janet M. Griffith, 51, of Center Street, was arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker on two felony counts of theft by failure to make required disposition of funds and one misdemeanor count of failure to make required disposition of funds.

Griffith was released on her own recognizance after investigators said they did not object. She was scheduled to appear for a preliminary hearing on Nov. 14.

"I am very disappointed that this occurred at our college," said LCCC President Thomas P. Leary. "It's always

disappointing when someone violates the public trust. I want to extend my appreciation to the law enforcement agencies for their thorough investigation and to the college's auditors and business consultants for their work as well."

After an investigation by Nanticoke police and the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office, investigators said Griffith took about \$16,000 while working as a secretary at the school's Public Safety Training Institute.

Court records indicate Griffith is represented by attorney Matthew Kelly of Kingston.

According to a criminal complaint, Nanticoke Detective Capt. William Shultz spoke on Feb. 22 with the college's director of security, Bill Barrett, who said an accounting firm had completed an annual 2011 audit of the Public Safety Training Institute, and that discrepancies were uncovered regarding missing funds.

The PSTI trains police officers, firefighters, paramedics, EMTs and truck drivers in a variety of courses, and opened in 2008.

An accountant reported to the college that the missing money came from student tuition payments that had been made in cash.

Barrett later spoke about the missing with Griffith, who denied responsibility for the missing funds and suggested there may have been mistakes with the financial statements.

Later that day, Griffith contacted Barrett, indicating she was willing to make repayment even though she did not take anything.

On March 9, Luzerne County Detective Lt. Gary Capitano became involved in the investigation and spoke with Leary, who said Griffith was responsible for collecting fees for many courses and for transporting the payments to the finance office every day.

According to the college, Griffith was hired as a custodian in August 2007 and moved into the secretary position in December 2008.

In October 2011, Griffith was moved back to the custodian position before she was placed on unpaid suspension in March 2012.

She was formally terminated from employment on Wednesday. Her annual salary had been \$23,585.

College employees informed investigators they were aware of financial difficulties Griffith was having, and that a number of calls were made to Griffith at work from creditors looking to speak with her.

An example of some missing funds, according to the criminal complaint, was a \$530 payment from two individuals who paid in cash for a weapons training course. Court papers say there was no record the payments were made and the cash was nowhere to be found.

11/7/2012

### **Former Nanticoke official waives DUI crash-related charges, faces arraignment**

Times Leader

A Mountain Top woman who worked as Nanticoke's city administrator and then was placed on leave after a driving-under-the-influence-related crash waived related charges to county court Tuesday.

Holly Cirko, 39, waived her right to a preliminary hearing, sending charges of DUI and careless driving to county court.

A third charge of accidental damage to an unattended vehicle or building was withdrawn.

Cirko will appear for a formal arraignment in county court on Jan. 11, according to court records.

Cirko had worked as Nanticoke city's administrator, but was placed on paid leave after crashing her car into a wall at about 3 a.m. on June 26.

Her last day of employment with the city was Aug. 3.

Police said Cirko was driving a Volkswagen Jetta that struck a retaining wall outside the 24-hour Coco Hut Convenience Mart in Nanticoke.

According to police, after hitting the wall, Cirko got out of her car, and went into the store.

She then got back into her car and drove away. Cirko was located a short time later by police.

11/1/2012

### **Two charged with assaulting tow-truck driver**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police have charged two people for assaulting City Wide Towing operator Bob Kadluboski after he towed a vehicle in Nanticoke in March.

Steven Smith, 23, of Maffett Street, Wilkes-Barre, was charged with simple assault, terroristic threats and criminal

mischief.

Candice Ruggere, 23 of South Walnut Street, Wilkes-Barre, was charged with simple assault and harassment.

According to arrest papers filed with Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker:

Ruggere called Kadluboski after he towed her vehicle March 17, which was parked in a plaza along North Market Street. He agreed to return the vehicle to the scene after she paid a \$200 charge by credit card. While Kadluboski was removing the Jeep from his flatbed, he said Smith was "giving him a hard time."

Smith then kicked the tow truck and attacked Kadluboski, punching him several times, police said. Kadluboski said he was able to wrestle Smith to the ground and put him in a choke hold, telling him, "stop fighting, it's over."

At that point, Ruggere jumped on Kadluboski's back and repeatedly punched him in the head, police said. A witness approached and broke up the melee. Smith warned Kadluboski "this isn't over," arrest papers said.

Kadluboski and the witness, Billie Jo Johnson, then drove over to the nearby Weis Market parking lot to speak. While talking, the Jeep approached and Smith got out. He threatened Kadluboski, saying "Do you know what I have in this Jeep?" Fearful that Smith had a weapon, Kadluboski said he retreated to get his pistol in his tow truck. While Smith was leaving, he kicked Johnson's vehicle, police said.

Responding police said Kadluboski suffered a busted lip and bruises to the face, but he declined treatment. Kadluboski said his doctor later determined he had post-concussion syndrome. He said he suffers from reoccurring headaches and also required eye surgery, he said.

Smith and Ruggere, who were mailed the charges, were scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Wednesday, but the case was rescheduled until Nov. 14.

10/27/2012

**Moms clash at homicide hearing as alleged gunman's story changes**

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Shawn Hamilton, alleged triggerman in July's shooting massacre in Plymouth, initially told investigators his little brother fired the barrage of bullets that killed three people and wounded another during a botched drug deal, police say. Now, he says he did it.

While being led from a court hearing Friday afternoon, Hamilton ignored his attorney's advice to remain silent and told reporters he fired the fatal bullets inside 401 First St. on July 7. He claimed his life was in jeopardy.

"So, you did all the shooting?" a reporter asked.

"Yeah, my brother, he's innocent," Hamilton said. "I did it in self-defense."

After two hours of testimony Friday, Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker ruled prosecutors presented enough evidence against Hamilton, 18, and his brother, Sawud Davis, 16, to forward the case to trial. The suspects did not testify.

Families of the victims and suspects then clashed outside the hearing and had to be separated by police when the alleged shooter's mother advanced the self-defense motive and suggested the victims shared some of the blame for putting themselves in a dangerous situation.

"We send out condolences to the family. They were all children," said Hamilton's and Davis' mother, who would only identify herself as Shawna. "But when you sell drugs, that's what comes along with drugs. It was a drug house. It was a drug deal gone bad. You sell drugs, there's guns involved."

Much of the evidence at Friday's hearing hinged on testimony by lone survivor, Danny Maldonado II, 19, who was shot in the head, torso and forearm. He claimed the brothers tried to rob them after the group smoked marijuana inside the apartment. Hamilton pulled a gun and demanded they turn over cash while Davis warned "this isn't a (expletive) game," he said. Danny Maldonado said he was the first one shot after he tried to lunge at Hamilton.

Hamilton and Davis, both of Philadelphia, now face charges of criminal homicide and robbery in the deaths of Bradley James Swartwood, 21, and Nicolas Robert Maldonado, 17, both of 401 First St., Plymouth, and Lisa Abaunza, 15, of Duryea, who Maldonado identified as Swartwood's girlfriend. They face an attempted murder charge for the shooting of Danny Maldonado.

When told that Hamilton claimed self-defense to reporters, prosecutors responded that it would be a tough sell with more than 10 shots fired at the victims, all hit multiple times.

"Four victims were there and all four of them were shot in the head. So, I think the public and a jury could draw their own conclusion," Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney William Finnegan said.\

Initial charging documents say Hamilton claimed Davis shot the four people during a botched drug deal. He said Swartwood, whose street name was "Wuz," had planned to sell them marijuana and they were going to sell heroin to

Swartwood. During the exchange, Nicolas Maldonado, also known as "Cannon," reached for the heroin, prompting Davis to shoot, Hamilton initially said.

After that, Davis shot everyone else in the house, saying he "couldn't leave any witnesses," Hamilton initially said, according to arrest papers.

Hamilton now claims he fired the shots in self-defense, but did not elaborate while being led to a state police cruiser Friday.

"Obviously, initially, they tried to create cover for themselves. The evidence points to Hamilton being the principle, and his brother helped. They are equally culpable for these deaths and the injuries to Mr. Maldonado," Finnegan said. "You don't have to actually pull the trigger to be found guilty."

During testimony on Friday, Danny Maldonado acknowledged his brother, Nicolas, and Swartwood invited Hamilton and Davis into the home and everyone smoked marijuana for about 20 minutes. Then, Hamilton pulled a gun, he said. "The big fella told everyone to empty their pockets. The skinnier one said, 'This isn't a (expletive) joke we're playing,'" Maldonado recalled.

Fearful, Danny Maldonado said he tried to lunge at Hamilton.

"I stood up and he shot me in the head. I went down and he shot me in the torso and arm," said Maldonado, who spent two weeks in the hospital and continues rehabilitation.

A day after the shooting, police captured the suspects at Rear 178 E. Ridge St. in Nanticoke, where authorities said they were staying for a matter of days. Investigators found a .40-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun and bloody sneakers at the apartment, police said.

Following the hearing, the two suspects were returned to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility, where they are being held without bail.

While being led from court, Davis ignored all questions about the case and continually directed comments at fellow prison inmates who are calling Hamilton a "rat."

"He ain't a rat," Davis said.

10/27/2012

**One suspect declares he shot victims**

**Shawn Hamilton tells reporters half brother Sawud Davis is innocent, contradicting prior statements.**

Edward Lewis - Times Leader

Shawn Hamilton said Friday that he – not his younger half brother – was the lone gunman who killed three people and critically injuring a fourth person in Plymouth.

In July, Hamilton had told police his half brother, Sawud Davis, 16, was the triggerman.

Hamilton, 18, made the revelation to reporters after a nearly three-hour preliminary hearing Friday before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

"My brother is innocent; it was self-defense," Hamilton professed. "I never said it was my brother. My brother didn't do anything. I love my brother, man. He didn't do nothing. He's innocent. I'm not taking the fall for nobody, man."

State police at Wyoming and county detectives allege Hamilton and Davis went to an apartment on First Street, Plymouth, on July 7 to buy marijuana and sell heroin to Daniel Maldonado, 20, Nicholas Maldonado, 17, Bradley Swartwood, 21, and Lisa Abaunza, 15.

County Detective Lt. Gary Sworen testified during the hearing that Hamilton, in two interviews, allegedly stated Davis was the gunman. Sworen said that during a third interview is when Hamilton allegedly admitted to shooting the four people in the apartment.

Only Daniel Maldonado survived the rampage. He suffered permanent injuries to his arm.

Acting Coroner William Lisman testified Nicholas Maldonado, Swartwood and Abaunza died from multiple gunshot wounds.

Sworen said bloody clothing allegedly belonging to Hamilton was recovered from a garbage can inside the Wyoming Valley Mall, where Hamilton purchased new clothes at a department store after the shooting. Bloody sneakers were also found, along with a .40-caliber gun, from Hamilton's apartment on East Ridge Street, Nanticoke, Sworen said.

Davis' attorney, Demetrius Fannick, in an attempt to have a first-degree homicide charge dismissed, said the bloody clothing and sneakers all belonged to Hamilton. Fannick said the gun was found in a drawer next to Hamilton's bed.

Hamilton's attorneys, Allyson Kacmarski and Robert Buttner, said their client in two interviews with investigators said Davis was the shooter and responsible for the homicides.

Whittaker determined assistant district attorneys William Finnegan Jr. and Rebecca Reimiller established a case against

the brothers, sending four open counts of criminal homicide and robbery and a single count of criminal attempt to commit homicide to county court. They remain jailed without bail.

Daniel Maldonado testified he was in his bedroom when Hamilton and Davis arrived at the apartment at about 9:20 p.m. He looked out of his door and saw marijuana on a coffee table and Hamilton telling him, "You're going to want to come out here."

Daniel Maldonado said Hamilton pulled out a gun and ordered him, his brother, Nicholas, Swartwood and Abaunza to empty their pockets.

"I ran and lunged at him," Daniel Maldonado said, saying he was thrown to the floor and shot in the head, chest and arm.

In response to questions posed by Kacmarski, Daniel Maldonado said he did not tell investigators he smoked marijuana before the shooting.

Maldonado's mother, Susana Handelong, wore a shirt with a picture of Nicholas to the hearing. After the proceeding, Handelong and the mother of Hamilton and Davis, who only identified herself as Shawna, confronted one another outside.

Shawna wanted to express her condolences to the Maldonado family while Handelong kept asking why her son, Nicholas, had to be killed.

10/26/2012

### **Half brothers face charges in triple killing**

Edward Lewis - Times Leader

Two half-brothers charged in the killing of three people during a drug deal in Plymouth in July will face homicide charges in Luzerne County court.

District Judge Donald Whittaker determined prosecutors established a case against Shawn Hamilton, 18, and his half brother Sawud Davis, 16, sending an open count of criminal homicide to county court.

State police at Wyoming allege Hamilton and Davis, both of Nanticoke, killed Bradley Swartwood, Nicholas Maldonado and Lisa Adaunza on July 7.

The two were also accused in the attempted homicide of Maldonado's older brother Danny, who testified at the preliminary hearing held today.

Luzerne County Det. Lt. Gary Sworen testified that Hamilton allegedly admitted that he fired the gun during the drug deal. Sworen testified that Hamilton made the alleged confession during a third interview with investigators.

Hamilton, in two previous interviews with investigators, claimed his brother was the shooter, Sworen testified.

After the hearing, Davis told reporters that his older brother Hamilton is not a rat and Hamilton said Davis was not the shooter that killed the three people.

10/25/2012

### **Nanticoke gunman jailed on threat charge**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police have filed charges against a man whose alleged threats lead to heightened security today at Greater Nanticoke Area Schools.

Joseph C. Fedorchak Jr., 20, of Honey Pot Street, Nanticoke, is charged with terroristic threats and disorderly conduct. Police said Fedorchak fired multiple shotgun blasts in a wooded area near his home.

A friend, who called police around 7 a.m., told police that Fedorchak was "not acting right" prior to the incident. The friend said Fedorchak was "distracted" over a recent break up and over being slashed in the hand recently.

Fedorchak recently said he planned to kill the ex-girlfriend and the person who stabbed him, the friend told police.

Police warned the possible targets this morning, and also advised the Greater Nanticoke Area School District because the people involved had attended the school, police said.

While there was no specific threat to the school, district officials decided to beef up security and keep students in their first period classes for much of the morning.

Around 11:30 a.m. this morning, Fedorchak surrendered to police in a wooded area behind his home after police heard him firing more shotgun blasts.

Police took possession of the weapon, which was loaded, police said.

Fedorchak was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker, who ordered him jailed in lieu of \$75,000 cash bail.

Police said they will make sure Fedorchak receives a mental health evaluation if needed.

10/25/2012

### **Man apprehended in Nanticoke, school no longer locked down**

Edward Lewis - Times Leader

Police Chief William Shultz said a man has been apprehended on charges he was carrying a firearm in a residential neighborhood in the Honey Pot section of Nanticoke earlier today.

Police searched for the man for most of the morning and requested the Greater Nanticoke Area High School be placed on lockdown as a precaution. It was but has since returned to normal operations.

Shultz said the man, Joseph Craig Fedorchak Jr., 20, of Nanticoke, was found in the woods with a shotgun. He will be arraigned later today on terroristic threat charges.

10/25/2012

### **Shotgun slaying suspect caught in Nanticoke**

Citizens Voice

An Effort man charged with criminal homicide after police exhumed the body of a man killed with a shotgun was caught Wednesday in Nanticoke, according to state police.

Michael Rhubart, 28, is also charged with aggravated assault, illegally possessing a firearm and tampering with evidence in the death of 33-year-old Jubar Hughes, also of Effort.

Kidder Township police were first tipped off about the slaying about 5 p.m. Monday, when they learned of a possible body buried in a field off Henning Road in Kidder Township, Carbon County, according to a report filed by Trooper Bruce W. Wesnak.

Officers arriving at the scene reported it appeared a body was buried there and called for state police backup, the report says.

Troopers, accompanied by an anthropologist from Bloomsburg University, exhumed Hughes' body, and an autopsy determined he had been killed by a shotgun blast to the head, Wesnak wrote.

Court documents identify Rhubart and Hughes as roommates living in Chestnuthill Township.

Rhubart was arrested Wednesday at 146 W. Church St., Nanticoke, and admitted to police he killed Hughes with a 12-gauge shotgun and then cleaned their home to conceal the crime, according to charging documents.

He was being held in the Monroe County Jail without bail.

10/23/2012

### **Nanticoke man charged with shooting at trooper during chase**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Amid a spree of violent crimes earlier this year, pistol-packing fugitive William Gronosky vowed not to be taken alive, police said in new charges filed Monday. Calling himself a "monster," he vowed to kill cops "if they got in his way," investigators say.

On the run for weeks, Gronosky was being sought on a host of serious accusations: robbing a disabled man in a gunpoint home invasion, holding up a strip club owner, stealing a trooper's service revolver in a burglary and shooting at police during a high-speed chase.

He was Luzerne County's top fugitive when a contingent of troopers converged on him the early morning hours of April 14 outside the Carousel Lounge strip club in Plymouth Township. As he promised, Gronosky didn't go down quietly.

While fleeing police in a rental car, Gronosky fired two gunshots at a pursuing state trooper's cruiser, enabling him to elude capture until he was arrested two days later in Montgomery County, police said in arrest papers.

State police at Wyoming on Monday filed charges against the 29-year-old for the high-drama incident on Route 11 - the fifth high-profile criminal episode for Gronosky within weeks earlier this year.

Gronosky, last known address of Church Street, Nanticoke, faces charges of assault on a police officer, aggravated assault, illegal possession of a firearm and fleeing police.

He was arraigned by video by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke, who ordered Gronosky jailed

on an additional \$100,000 bail. In all, Gronosky is jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility with bail set at \$1.4 million cash.

Arrest papers allege what police suspected all along: Gronosky was shooting at state police with one of their own guns. Investigators said Gronosky stole the .45 caliber Glock on March 23 during a burglary at a state trooper's home in Laflin.

Police said Gronosky also used the gun to fire 12 gunshots at a Wilkes-Barre police officer March 26 during a 20-mile chase as the officer tried to stop him following the Hanover Township home invasion.

The stolen gun was found after police in Montgomery County caught Gronosky inside a convenience store upon locating the vehicle he drove the night of the Plymouth Township shooting - a gold 2011 Chevrolet Cruze. Gronosky was nabbed with Kevin Williams Jr., 29, of Wilkes-Barre - his co-defendant in a March 15 gunpoint robbery of strip-club owner Jules Greenberg of the Carousel Lounge.

During later interviews with state police, Gronosky said the police in Montgomery County caught him off guard inside the store and he left the stolen gun in the glove compartment.

Investigators said Gronosky noted "if he took the gun inside, and police approached him, there would have been a shootout."

10/13/2012

**Luzerne County Judge Fred Pierantoni on Friday sentenced Michael Whalley, 30, last known address as South Walnut Street, Nanticoke, to 15 months to five years in state prison on charges he assaulted Wilkes-Barre police officers.**

Times Leader

City police investigated a man slashing tires in the 400 block of South Franklin Street on July 17, 2009. Whalley was found holding two knives in an apartment at 420 S. Franklin St., where he fought with officers, according to the criminal complaint.

Whalley was transported to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital where he threatened an emergency room nurse and spat at officers, the complaint says.

He was also sentenced on a criminal trespass charge filed by Nanticoke police when he entered a residence on State Street and caused a disturbance on March 9, 2011, and a drunken driving charge filed by Hanover Township police who investigated a crash on the Sans Souci Parkway on March 10, 2011.

10/13/2012

**Pair sentenced in home invasion**

**Daniels gets time served plus probation; Rausch, 24 months in probationary curriculum.**

elewis@timesleader.com

Minutes after Theresa Daniels and David Rausch were ordered by a Luzerne County judge to stay away from one another, they sat together and chatted outside the judge's courtroom on Friday.

Daniels, 24, of Hanover Village, Hanover Township, and Rausch, 18, of West Main Street, Nanticoke, were sentenced for their roles in a deadly home invasion in Hunlock Township on Feb. 8, 2011.

State police at Wyoming said Daniels and Rausch took part in the burglary with Robert Muntz, 44.

A masked Muntz, armed with a stolen .22-caliber handgun, stormed into a trailer on Old Tavern Road and confronted a sleeping Jeff Laton about money owed to him. During a scuffle in a bedroom, Laton's girlfriend, Amanda Bowman, fired two shots, striking Muntz once in the head, instantly killing him.

Bowman was cleared of the deadly shooting as former District Attorney Jacqueline Musto Carroll called it justifiable homicide.

State police said the trailer was used to manufacture methamphetamines.

Daniels and Rausch each pleaded guilty to burglary and reckless endangerment charges.

Judge Fred Pierantoni III sentenced Daniels to 103 days time served at the county prison plus 18 months probation and 25 hours community service. She was represented by attorney Allyson Kacmarski.

Rausch was sentenced to 24 months in the county's Intermediate Punishment Program, a special probationary curriculum, with the first 10 months on house arrest with electronic monitoring.

Before Rausch's sentence was imposed, his lawyer, Joseph Sklarosky Sr., told Pierantoni that his client comes from a loving family, the members of which are still figuring out why their son was with Muntz.

“I doubt you’ll see (Rausch) standing in front of you again,” Sklarosky said to Pierantoni.

Pierantoni separately told Daniels and Rausch not to have any contact with one another or with the people charged in the manufacturing of methamphetamine in the trailer.

While Daniels and Rausch arrived at the courthouse together, Pierantoni told Daniels to call a taxi to leave.

Immediately after the proceeding ended for Daniels, who was sentenced after Rausch, the two sat next to each other talking outside Pierantoni’s courtroom.

10/12/2012

Citizens Voice

### **City police reported the following incidents:**

Ernest Truly, of Fairchild Street, reported someone smashed a window of his vehicle with a brick.

John Yaskoweak, of East Union Street, reported someone threw a large rock through his front bay window of his home.

Catherine Oshinski, of West Ridge Street, was taken into custody on a warrant filed by the Luzerne County Courts. She was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

Edward Nork, 38, was arrested in the 100 block of South Market Street in connection with an arrest warrant filed April 23 in Lancaster County for a parole violation. Nork was jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

10/12/2012

### **Police Blotter**

Times Leader

Plymouth - Police investigating an incident at the Sunoco Quick N’ EZ Stop on East Main Street on Thursday captured a fugitive wanted on robbery charges in Nanticoke.

Joshua Ruchinski, 22, of Second Street, Plymouth, was caught after a foot chase, police said.

Ruchinski was wanted by Nanticoke police on charges he robbed and assaulted two people in a house on West Noble Street on Sept. 19, according to arrest records.

Ruchinski was arraigned Thursday on six counts of robbery, two counts of simple assault and a single count of theft. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$30,000 bail.

10/4/2012

### **Raids target video gambling**

### **Machines are seized at several bars, taverns**

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In a two-county crackdown, troopers and enforcement officers with the state police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement raided numerous area bars and taverns Wednesday evening, seizing scores of video gambling machines. LCE officers were spotted wheeling video poker machines and other electronic gambling devices out of four bars in Nanticoke between 6 and 6:30 p.m.

Most officers involved in the operation declined comment. One officer deferred comment to Trooper Tom Kelly, public information officer for state police Troop P in Wyoming.

All that officer said he could say was that it was a “huge” operation in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties.

Kelly did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Raids on bars witnessed by Times Leader reporters include the Town Tavern on Front Street, Ruby’s Inn on Espy Street, The Witch on South Market Street and American Legion Post 350 on West Broad Street, all in Nanticoke.

The owner of Ruby’s Inn declined comment. The bartender at the American Legion said a Legion officer was too busy to speak with a reporter.

At the Town Tavern, John Bushko, the husband of bar owner Barbara Bushko, stood on the sidewalk watching an LCE officer wheel out four poker machines from the bar.

Bushko, the former mayor of Nanticoke, said the machines are owned by a vending company with whom his wife splits revenues generated from the machines. He couldn’t recall the name of the vending company.

“The machines just make about \$30 a week. The casino takes all the business,” Bushko said, referring to The Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs in Plains Township. “Twenty years ago, they used to do really good. Now they don’t.”

Currently, casinos in Pennsylvania are the only establishments allowed to have permits to operate slot machines. They

paid \$50 million for gaming licenses that guarantee their exclusive rights until 2016.

In 2009, then Gov. Ed Rendell announced a proposal to legalize video poker machines and use the revenues they generate to offer tuition relief for students attending the state's community colleges or public universities.

Under the proposal, bars, taverns, restaurants and private clubs – establishments that have liquor licenses – would have been eligible to have up to five video poker machines.

But the bill never came up for a vote. Casino owners weren't buying Rendell's argument that the machines would be "video lottery terminals," not slot machines. They would have demanded the state reimburse them for the \$50 million gaming license fees they each paid.

The prospect of a half-billion-dollar hurdle and potential legal action come as bad news to some club officials who had said they were hanging on in the hope the legislation would pass.

In the past, revenue from a handful of illegal poker machines allowed many of the 3,000 clubs statewide to offer \$1 drafts and cheap food to members.

Since the state legalized slot machines, many of the clubs have been repeatedly raided, forcing many to give up their machines. Many have closed and others could follow.

Gambling cases are investigated by the State Police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement, which will either file criminal charges against the licensee or handle the case administratively by filing an action with the Liquor Control Board.

If a case is handled administratively, an administrative law judge with the LCB will hear evidence and issue an enforcement action, such as a fine or license suspension, if the violation is proven. Money seized is subject to forfeiture regardless if criminal charges were filed.

Asked why his wife's bar pays out money to gamblers on winning spins if he knows it's illegal, Bushko said, "Everybody who owns these machines does it. It's been that way for the past 40 years."

Bushko said he doesn't intend to have any more gambling machines put in the bar and noted that the city will lose revenue.

"In Nanticoke, you pay \$100 for each machine" in amusement tax, he said.

Bushko said business has been poor lately, and now the small customer draw that the machines had is gone.

"Kids go to The Woodlands (Inn & Resort in Plains Township) and pay \$4 a drink. Here, they would pay \$1.50 and they don't come in," Bushko said. "It's time to retire anyway."

9/24/2012

**Police arrested Michael Rubino, 28, of Pittston, and Crystal Rodriguez, 28, of Nanticoke, at approximately 6 p.m. Friday at Walmart on Route 315**

Times Leader

Police said Rubino was wanted on an outstanding warrant from Pittston police related to burglary charges and a warrant from Larksville police related to drug paraphernalia and other charges. Police said Rodriguez had an outstanding warrant from Larksville police in connection with the same incident.

Walmart contacted police after Rubino and Rodriguez allegedly attempted to purchase electronics with checks that were possibly stolen, police said.

9/21/2012

**Pair sought in Nanticoke home invasion**

Bob Kalinowski and Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

EDITOR'S NOTE: An earlier version of this story misidentified the second suspect

Police are looking for two men they say earned the trust of a victim, went to his house in Nanticoke and beat him and his wife before taking prescription drugs and cash.

Police said Joshua Ruchinski, 22, of Plymouth, and another man, identified only as "Rock," assaulted Edward Ryan, 50, and Paula Ryan, 45, at the couple's home at Rear 20 W. Noble St. just before 11 p.m. Wednesday.

Investigators said Ruchinski and the other man fled the home with prescription drugs and \$100 after the attack.

The robbers spotted Edward Ryan walking his dog around 10:50 p.m. and approached him, police said.

Police said the robbers were familiar with the victim after recently meeting Ruchinski. They knew the dog's name, said they knew Ryan's son and talked about Ruchinski recently encountering one of the suspects on a bus.

Investigators said the two men, both in their 20s, asked if they could "hang out" and later returned to Ryan's house. The men introduced themselves to Ryan's wife as "Josh" and "Rock," police said. Soon after, police said the robbers grabbed a pocket knife from a coffee table and attacked the couple before fleeing with cash, prescription medicine and the pocket knife.

Edward and Paula Ryan separately identified Ruchinski from a photo lineup, police said.

Police charged Ruchinski with six counts of robbery, two counts of simple assault and one count of theft.

Edward Ryan was taken by ambulance to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, where he received 15 sutures above his left eye. Poice said he was also treated for a puncture wound to his elbow.

Paula Ryan sustained various cuts and brusies, police said.

The second suspect, "Rock," is identified as a white male in his early 20s, approximately 5'6" with short blonde hair. He was wearing a white T-shirt and tan pants.

Anyone with information about the crime is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200.

9/20/2012

### **Man charged with torching Nanticoke garage, church shed**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police have arrested a man in connection with two arson fires in the city, including one that torched church property along Middle Road.

Jeffrey W. Deyo, 18, of 137 S. Hanover St., Apt. 6, in Nanticoke, confessed to torching a full storage shed at the Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church on Aug. 15 and a garage at 383 E. Grand St. on Aug. 25, according to charges filed. Deyo was arraigned this afternoon by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke, who ordered Deyo jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$75,000 cash bail

The fire at the 220 Middle Road church destroyed materials and donations being stored in a shed for a flea market that was upcoming at the church

"Like I told the state trooper, we might not catch him, but one day he's going to stand before God," John Mosley, church pastor, said at the time.

The church building, home to about 40 parishioners, didn't sustain any damage.

Deyo was charged with multiple counts of arson and criminal mischief.

9/20/2012

### **Two people assaulted, robbed in their home**

Times Leader

City police are investigating a robbery by two men who befriended a homeowner on West Noble Street Wednesday night.

Edward Ryan told police he was walking his dog and was met by two men in the area of East Noble and South Prospect streets. One of the suspects said to Ryan, "Hey, is that Stoney?" referring to the dog.

The two suspects continued to talk to Ryan saying they recently met him on a bus and asked if they could "hang out" at Ryan's house.

When they returned to Ryan's house, one of the suspects asked him to keep the dog outside because he was afraid of dogs.

After they entered the house, one of the suspects grabbed a pocket knife from a table and attacked Ryan and his wife, Paula Ryan.

Police said the Ryans suffered injuries to their faces. The suspects left the house with \$100 and prescription drugs, police said.

Police identified a suspect has having the name "Josh," white male, early 20s, about 5 feet 9 inches tall, dark short hair and wore a gray shirt. The other suspect is known as "Rock," early 20s, about 5 feet 6 inches tall, short blonde hair and wore a white t-shirt and tan pants.

Anyone with information about the robbery and assault is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200.

9/20/2012

Times Leader

### **City police reported the following:**

- Chondra Ritter and Angela Waldbauer, of West Green Street, reported an unknown person entered their apartment and stole a silver wedding band, a hand-made bow with initials DDLL and two dozen wood arrows.
- Curtis Lamoreaux, of South Market Street, reported a 46-inch Vizio flat screen television was stolen from his residence.
- Nancy Giberson, of West Grand Street, reported a television, a cell phone and a crystal globe were stolen from her residence.
- A laptop computer was reported stolen during a burglary at Grave 74 Tattoo Studio on Middle Road. A window was smashed at the business.
- Police charged Sandra Jean Arnold, 45, of Walnut Street, Alden, with drunken driving after she was allegedly found intoxicated operating a vehicle in the parking lot of Turkey Hill on West Main Street on Sept. 14. Arnold admitted to police she consumed alcoholic beverages and was driving the vehicle because her husband was too intoxicated to drive, according to the criminal complaint. Police allege in the complaint Arnold had a blood alcohol level of .178 percent. An adult driver in Pennsylvania is considered intoxicated with a BAC of .08 percent. Two counts of driving under the influence and a single count of driving with a suspended license were filed against Arnold with District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Oct. 17.

9/20/2012

**Man arrested on molestation charges**

Times Leader

A man was arrested early Thursday on charges he molested a teenage girl. Nicholas James Molina, 19, of Nanticoke, was arraigned on two counts of indecent assault and a single count of underage drinking. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$2,500 bail. A teenage girl reported she was awakened by Molina molesting her inside a residence on West Noble Street just before 3 a.m., according to the criminal complaint. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Sept. 26 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

9/14/2012

**Police: Drunk woman tossed mug at bartender**

Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke woman was cited for disorderly conduct after creating a scene at Larry's Pizza on Thursday. Police said restaurant staff told Stephani Smith, 25, of East Union Street, that she would no longer be served alcohol because she was drunk. Upon being asked to leave, Smith took her food, which was not paid for, and a beer mug. She argued with the bartender and threw the mug at her, smashing it, police said.

9/13/2012

**Police Blotter**

Citizens Voice

**A man allegedly violated a protection-from-abuse order his mother had against him by threatening her, city police said.**

Denise Byron of East Ridge Street told police her son Daetrell Lamar Byron, 19, had been staying with her, but that when she came home from work on Thursday he started yelling and cursing at her about money. Denise Byron said Daetrell Byron threatened to kill her if she called the cops, and started throwing things. Daetrell Byron is charged with violating a protection from abuse order, which police said was issued to his mother in February and expires in December.

**A man faces charges of simple assault and harassment after a fight with his girlfriend allegedly turned physical.**

Natalie Shaffer told police she and her boyfriend, Matthew D. Levandowsky, 23, of Apollo Circle were arguing on Thursday and it escalated into a physical confrontation. She said he grabbed her by her hair, slapped her in the face and pushed her out the back door of the apartment.

Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker set bail at \$50,000. A woman is charged with theft after allegedly stealing money from her mother, police said.

On Sept. 4, officers went to the East Noble Street house of Florence Bigos, who told them her daughter Janine Mayewski, 41, took \$150 from a bank envelope containing \$300, which was hidden under a pillow in her bedroom.

**A city man faces charges after tooling around on an all-terrain vehicle on public roads and fleeing from an officer trying to stop him.**

Douglas Edward Smith, Jr., 42, of Minden Court, is charged with attempting to elude a police officer, operating an ATV on the highway, driving without a license and careless driving.

Sgt. Joseph Guydosh said that about 12:35 a.m. Aug. 30 he saw an ATV with a broken taillight heading north on U.S. Route 11, then cross the West Nanticoke bridge into the city, driving on the roads. When Guydosh turned on the lights and siren of the police cruiser, the ATV driver drove off into the woods.

Guydosh followed the road parallel to the ATV while a female passenger on the vehicle yelled taunts at him.

Guydosh caught up with the ATV at the end of a trail that exits at West Main Street, and the driver, identified as Smith, surrendered immediately.

In custody, Smith admitted to fleeing and said he was "just being stupid."

9/13/2012

**Sweet Valley man charged with choking girlfriend**

Citizens Voice

A man from Sweet Valley choked his girlfriend with a tire iron, then ran away to avoid arrest, city police said.

Corey James Kittle, 19, is charged with simple assault, harassment and flight to avoid apprehension.

Nanticoke police went to an apartment on East Washington Street on Sept. 1 and spoke with the victim, Ashley Nearhouse, who told the officers she and Kittle were having an argument that turned physical when he pushed her to the floor.

Kittle then grabbed a tire iron and forcibly pushed it on Nearhouse's neck to the point where she said she could hardly breathe. After a struggle, Nearhouse said she got away and tried to run for the door, but Kittle grabbed her and dragged her across the floor.

Nearhouse managed to get away from Kittle and called 911, and Kittle ran from the apartment.

After police caught Kittle, he was arraigned in front of Magisterial District Judge James Tupper and jailed in Luzerne County Correctional Facility with bail set at \$3,000 cash.

9/6/2012

**Wrought iron gates stolen from Nanticoke homes**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Thieves stole wrought iron gates from two homes in Nanticoke early Wednesday, and in both cases a similar pickup was spotted fleeing the scene, Nanticoke police said.

The homes targeted were in the 1100 block of South Prospect Street and the 100 block of West Broad Street, city police said.

In both cases, witnesses told police a light-colored, older-model, full-size pickup with a loud exhaust was spotted fleeing the scene, police said.

**Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200**

9/6/2012

**A homeless woman was arrested on charges she threatened a 14-year-old girl and assaulted two police officers.**

Times Leader

Jill A. Harris, 41, was charged with two counts each of aggravated assault and resisting arrest, three counts of disorderly conduct, and one count each of harassment and public drunkenness. She was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

A group of teenagers were hanging out at Patriot Square Sunday night when Harris began yelling obscenities. When the teenagers ignored Harris, she became more upset and started a fight with a teen girl.

Police said they observed Harris yelling obscenities and poking her finger in a teen girl's chest. Harris struggled with officers when she was arrested and spat in an officer's face when she was placed in a holding cell, the complaint says.

9/1/2012

**A Nanticoke man who pleaded guilty to robbing a convenient store and entering another home was sentenced Thursday to eight to 23 months in county prison**

Times Leader

Daniel Olshefski, 24, of Burnett Street, was sentenced by Judge Fred Pierantoni on charges of robbery, criminal trespassing and theft by unlawful taking. Olshefski pleaded guilty to the charges in July and also received a year of probation Thursday.

Pierantoni said Olshefski will receive 51 days credit for time already served and must complete 30 hours of community service.

According to court papers, on Nov. 21, police say Olshefski attempted to rob the Cocoa Hut convenience store on Middle Road in Nanticoke, but was chased away by the clerk.

In the other incident, police said on Jan. 3, Olshefski entered a Franklin Street, Nanticoke, home and removed jewelry.

8/31/2012

**City police reported the following:**

Times Leader

- Thomas Beida, of South Hanover Street, reported someone threw a rock through his garage window.
- James Gordon, of Garfield Street, Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness, operation in unsafe manner and operation on streets and highways after he was observed operating an all-terrain vehicle on the street, police said.
- Clement Sosnak, of West Main Street, Nanticoke, was cited with public drunkenness after an incident on East Broad Street.
- Justin Eckrote, of West Green Street, Nanticoke, reported someone stole multiple power tools from his basement.
- Ralph Conflitti, of West Broad Street, reported someone entered his apartment and stole a crossbow from his basement.

8/30/2012

**A Nanticoke man who pleaded guilty last month to several drug-related charges was sentenced Wednesday to five to 10 years in state prison.**

Times Leader

Hector Lopez, 23, of East Main Street, was sentenced on charges of possession with intent to deliver heroin and possession with intent to deliver cocaine, and two criminal conspiracy charges. Judge Fred Pierantoni said Lopez will receive 308 days credit for time already served and must complete 25 hours of community service when released from prison.

According to court papers, in October 2011, police said Lopez sold suspected heroin to a police informant. Police then searched Lopez's home, where they recovered 842 packets of suspected heroin, 34 grams of suspected crack cocaine and marijuana.

Assistant District Attorney Jill Matthews Lada prosecuted the case. Lopez was represented by attorney Robert Lynch of Philadelphia.

8/27/2012

**Nanticoke man charged with assaulting mother**

Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man was arrested Sunday morning after a domestic dispute with his mother.

According to Hanover Township police, 21-year-old Nicholas J. Vezo was seen assaulting his mother, Denise Vezo, in front of the Marion Terrace apartments at approximately 1:50 a.m.

Nicholas Vezo is charged with simple assault, harassment, disorderly conduct and public drunkenness.

8/23/2012

**Cops: Weis worker attacks ex-sister-in-law at store**

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

A Weis Markets employee attacked his ex-sister-in-law while she was shopping in the Nanticoke grocery store, police said.

According to a police affidavit: On Saturday, Joshua Lamoreaux, 33, of Hunlock Creek kicked Diane Lamoreaux's right hip and knocked her to the ground while she was shopping with her children in the store. Store manager Richard Hannick called police to report the incident. Joshua Lamoreaux fled before an officer arrived.

Diane Lamoreaux, no age or address given, said she had recently undergone neck surgery and complained of pain in her neck and right hip. An ambulance transported her to a local hospital. On Monday, police reviewed her medical records with a doctor. The records showed bruising in her right hip and right bicep.

Police charged Joshua Lamoreaux with simple assault and harassment.

A manager at Weis Markets would not comment on the incident Wednesday and referred questions to the regular store manager, who was not available.

8/20/2012

**Woman sought for bogus court check**

Times Leader

City police said Monday they are searching for a woman who cashed a check that was illegally reproduced using a magisterial district court's check.

Police said the \$969 check was cashed at United Check Cashing in Edwardsville on June 27. The check was a reproduction of what a court check issued by District Judge Donald Whittaker would issue to people owed restitution. The bogus check was made payable to Tamina J. Williams of 260 Rutter Ave., Kingston. An investigation determined the woman who cashed the check was not Williams and the Rutter Avenue address does not exist.

Anyone with information about the woman's identity is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 ext. 206.

The U.S. Secret Service in Scranton is assisting in the investigation.

8/20/2012

**Police search for man in assault case**

Times Leader

City police said Monday they are searching for George Richards, 26, of Nanticoke, for his alleged role in a stabbing in June.

An arrest warrant was issued for Richards charging him with aggravated assault, simple assault and harassment.

Police allege Richards assaulted Floyd Bernard on East Main Street on June 30. Bernard was beaten with a wood object and stabbed, police said.

Richard Shaw, 28, of Wilkes-Barre, was arrested July 18 for his alleged role. Shaw was charged with aggravated assault, harassment and two counts of simple assault. He was freed after posting \$75,000 bail on July 26, according to court records.

Anyone with information about the whereabouts of Richards is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-2200 or 911.

8/17/2012

**Police reported the following incidents: Citizens Voice**

Joseph Selner, 43, of Nanticoke, was cited for public drunkenness after police received numerous reports of him lying in the grass in the 100 block of East Washington Street.

Matthew Ceppa, 43, of Nanticoke, was cited for public drunkenness after police found him passed out in a front yard in the 200 block of East Union Street.

Christine Xander, 48, of East Ridge Street, was charged with simple assault and harassment after allegedly attacking her husband after a night of drinking at a local private club. She told police he texted her an obscene comment while she was at the bar.

Police arrested Steven M. Tagnani, 22, of 275 Apollo Circle, on charges of simple assault, harassment and disorderly

conduct for punching a neighbor in the head about 2:45 a.m. Aug. 13. The assault came not long after Tagnani received several citations for an earlier incident with the victim, police said.

Donzel R. Davis Sr., 39, was arrested for showing up at his girlfriend's apartment in the Apollo Circle public housing complex after he was banned from the property by the Nanticoke Housing Authority, police said. Davis was charged with criminal trespass.

8/16/2012

### **Plains Twp. man accused of stealing weapon**

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

A man who allegedly stole a handgun from a Nanticoke hunting store's display case was detained by the store's owner while they waited for police to arrive, authorities said.

Police charged Jonathan Smith, 29, of Plains Township with theft by unlawful taking and retail theft after he allegedly stole a .380-caliber handgun from Hunting Depot, 39 S. Prospect St. around 5:15 p.m. Tuesday. Police said video footage showed Smith and another man, identified by police as Jason Hollitt, no age or address given, enter the store and look at weapons. Then the footage showed Smith reach over a counter, pull out the \$175 handgun, put it in his pocket and leave through the back door, police said.

Smith, who was later detained by the store's owner, was lodged at Luzerne County Correctional Facility on \$15,000 bail.

8/15/2012

### **Nanticoke police investigating arson**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke and state police are investigating an overnight arson fire on the property of a church along Middle Road. Authorities say someone torched a storage shed belonging to Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church at 220 Middle Road, a small church with about 40 members.

The fire was reported by a passing motorist around 2:50 a.m., authorities said.

"Like I told the state trooper, we might not catch him, but one day he's going to stand before God," said Pastor John Mosley.

Mosley said the shed contained materials and donations for an upcoming flea market at the church and some landscaping equipment.

The shed, which was destroyed by the fire, has been burglarized several times in the past, Mosley said.

A state police fire marshal examined the scene Wednesday afternoon and determined the fire was arson, Nanticoke Fire Chief Mike Bohan said.

Anyone with information about who set the fire is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200.

8/15/2012

### **20-year-old police officer suspended after DUI arrest**

Michael R. Sisak - [bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com)

A rookie cop's career is on the rocks amid allegations he got boozed up and plowed his car into a pair of parked vehicles while off-duty near his home in Nanticoke.

John Urbanski, 20, has been suspended from a part-time position with the police force in Wyoming and has resigned from a "fill-in" role with the department in Newport Township, according to officials in those communities.

"We're waiting to see the outcome," Wyoming Mayor Bob Boyer said Tuesday after details of the June incident were made public.

Urbanski did not return a telephone message left at his home.

Urbanski, of 424 E. Grand St., told officers he slugged two beers and drank from a bottle of Coca-Cola that "must have had a mixed drink in it" before driving his car into a parked GMC Sierra pickup and a Honda Civic about 5:30 a.m., police said.

Police said the off-duty officer had a blood-alcohol content level of .16 at the time of the crash - twice the legal limit in Pennsylvania and eight times the limit for a person under 21.

The crash happened June 13, police said, but the charges, which include driving under the influence and underage

drinking, only became public this week after Urbanski answered a summons mailed to his home. Urbanski faces up to six months in jail but will likely be eligible for an Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition program, which is reserved for first-time offenders or defendants who have had clean criminal records for at least 10 years before their arrest. Completing the program would allow Urbanski to retain his police officer certification. Urbanski also faces a suspension of his driver's license. Urbanski joined the Wyoming force after graduating from the Lackawanna County police academy in December 2010. After Urbanski's arrest, the borough removed him from its work schedule, placed him in an employee-assistance program and ordered him to submit to a drug and alcohol evaluation, Boyer said. Urbanski had only worked in Newport Township "one or two weeks" before the crash, Chief Rob Impaglia said. Urbanski immediately resigned and wrote a letter of apology, pre-empting potential disciplinary action by the township. "He took the right steps," Impaglia said.

8/11/2012

**A Nanticoke man faces several charges after he allegedly used a hammer to smash his way through a door and into a Wilkes-Barre home and threatened to kill everyone inside.**

Times Leader

City police said they received a call from Clement Sosnak, of 324 E. Union St. at about 7:30 p.m. Thursday to report that Lee Antonik called him and threatened to come to the house and kill everyone. Officer Bryan Kata said he called Sosnak just after 8 p.m. and, while talking with him, heard glass shattering and Sosnak told him Antonik was smashing out the back door window with a hammer. As Kata was approaching the house, he saw Antonik walk away from the residence, cross the street and toss a hammer into some bushes. Kata retrieved the hammer and placed it into evidence. Sosnak told police Antonik had called him just before Kata called him and Antonik told him he was "going to kill every one of them including your son. I'm going to slit your throats and bust everyone's head in." Antonik, 36, of Miner Street in the Wanamie section of Nanticoke, was charged with three counts each of simple assault and making terroristic threats, two counts of stalking and one count each of burglary and criminal mischief. He was arraigned before District Judge Andrew Barilla and, unable to post bail, was lodged at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility.

8/4/2012

**Gunman steals convenience store cash drawer**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

A gun-toting man robbed a convenience store clerk and a customer early Friday in Nanticoke, city police said. Nanticoke police said the robber walked into Cocoa Hut at 61 E. Main St. around 3:05 a.m. with a blue bandana covering his face. The robber, holding a silver handgun, approached a customer at the counter and demanded "give me your money." The man then snatched a \$5 bill from the customer, 53, who was attempting to purchase a coffee, police said. Police said the clerk, 58, then emerged from a rear office and the robber pointed the gun at her and demanded money from the register. The clerk feared for her life and retreated to the office. The robber reached for and grabbed the cash register drawer and fled. Investigators said the robber had an accomplice who was waiting in a getaway car. The robber is described as a white male in his early 20s, 5 feet 6 inches tall and about 140 pounds. He had blond hair and was wearing a blue shirt and blue bandana. Anyone with information is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200.

7/30/2012

**Police Blotter**

Citizens Voice

Hanover Township Police arrested Carl May, 19, of Kosciuszko Street, Nanticoke, on drug possession charges following a traffic stop Friday morning on the Sans Souci Parkway. Police said May was illegally in possession of tablets of Oxycodone and hydrocodone that were not prescribed to him. May was charged with possession of a

controlled substance, driving without a driver's license, and failure to use a turn signal.

7/28/2012

**2nd arrest made in Pittston legion break-in, burglary**

**Patrick R. Shanahan of Nanticoke is arraigned. A woman is also in custody.**

elewis@timesleader.com

Police arrested a second person they allege burglarized the American Legion on Vine Street earlier this week. Patrick Ryan Shanahan, 20, of East Noble Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned Friday on charges of burglary, criminal trespass, conspiracy to commit burglary, conspiracy to commit criminal trespass, conspiracy to commit criminal mischief and possessing instruments of crime. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$30,000 bail.

An arrest warrant was issued for Shanahan on Tuesday when, police believe, the Legion was burglarized.

Police allege Shanahan and Brandi Balasavage, 26, of Scott Street, Wilkes-Barre, forced their way inside the Legion just before 2:30 a.m. and pried open machines containing coins and bills.

According to the criminal complaints:

Police heard people running out of the Legion and into woods. Officers chased two people and arrested Balasavage after she fell down an embankment.

Two backpacks and a crowbar were found next to Balasavage on the ground.

Police said in the complaints Shanahan and Balasavage pried open a cash register, a music machine and a money change machine.

Balasavage was charged with similar offenses and remained jailed Friday at the county correctional facility for lack of \$75,000 bail.

She allegedly told police she felt Shanahan was taking too long inside the Legion to pry open the machines.

It is not the first time Balasavage has been accused of forcing her way into a business and prying open machines containing money.

Court records indicate Balasavage was sentenced in November 2010 on charges she burglarized the Anthracite Café on Scott Street, Wilkes-Barre, on Dec. 7, 2009, and Dukus' Café on Pringle Street, Kingston, on April 8, 2010, prying open jukeboxes, video game machines and an ATM.

Preliminary hearings are scheduled on Wednesday before District Judge Andrew Barilla in Pittston.

7/24/2012

**Woman is arrested in Pittston burglary**

elewis@timesleader.com

Police arrested a Wilkes-Barre woman after investigating a burglary at the American Legion on Vine Street early Monday morning.

Brandi Balasavage, 26, of Scott Street, was found lying on her back in woods near the legion just before 2:30 a.m. A back pack and a crowbar were on the ground next to her, police said.

Police allege Balasavage pried open a cash register, a music machine and a money change machine, according to arrest records.

It's not the first time Balasavage has been accused of forcing her way into a business and prying open machines containing money.

Court records indicate Balasavage was sentenced in November 2010 on charges she forced her way into the Anthracite Café on Scott Street, Wilkes-Barre, on Dec. 7, 2009, and Dukus' Café on Pringle Street, Kingston, on April 8, 2010, prying open jukeboxes, video game machines and an ATM.

A county judge issued an arrest warrant for Balasavage on July 12 charging her with failing to appear in court on a contempt hearing related to the burglaries in 2009 and 2010, court records say.

According to the latest criminal complaint:

Police investigated a burglar alarm at the American Legion and heard people running from the building into woods. Officers chased and arrested Balasavage, who claimed she fell down an embankment.

Police filed charges of burglary, criminal trespass, conspiracy and possessing instruments of crime against Ryan Patrick Shanahan, 20, of Nanticoke, in connection with the incident. He has not been arraigned.

The burglary at the legion was recorded by video, police said.

Balasavage is scheduled for a preliminary hearing on Aug. 1 before District Judge Andrew Barilla in Pittston.

7/20/2012

**Police: Man posed as doctor to acquire drugs**

Matt Bufano - Citizens Voice

Charges have been filed against a Nanticoke man for allegedly calling a Hanover Township pharmacy posing as a doctor, then using his stolen identity to try filling a prescription, according to police.

Police say Joshua Frame, 30, called Gerrity's pharmacy department Tuesday, saying he was a doctor prescribing Vicodin to patient Joshua Frame.

After suspecting something was amiss, the pharmacist called police, who arrested Frame when he arrived.

After checking with Luzerne County 911, police were notified Frame already had a warrant for arrest stemming from a Nanticoke burglary in September.

Frame is charged with felony criminal attempt and identity theft. Frame remained in jail as of Thursday afternoon, with no bail set.

7/19/2012

**Nanticoke cop attacked by two pit bulls, shoots both**

Matt Bufano - Citizens Voice

Police shot two pit bulls, one fatally, outside 696 Front St. in Nanticoke on Wednesday, according to police.

An officer responding to a complaint of two pit bulls on the loose was attacked by both dogs and bitten on the upper right leg by one shortly after getting out of his car, police said.

The officer then shot each dog once in self-defense, police said.

One dog survived and was returned to the owner, while the other pit bull suffered a fatal wound.

Charges are pending against the owner of the pit bulls, whose name has not been released. Police said the officer will possibly undergo shots for his health.

Police would not release the officer's name.

7/19/2012

**Authorities charge suspect in Nanticoke slashing**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police charged a man Wednesday in connection with a stabbing that occurred June 30 on East Main Street in the city.

Police charged Richard A. Shaw, 28, last known address of 3 W. Union St., Nanticoke, with aggravated assault, simple assault and harassment.

Investigators say Shaw slashed Floyd Bernard during a fight in the parking lot of Janison's Floral about 11:50 p.m. The two were fighting because Bernard, who lives across the street, would no longer let an acquaintance of Shaw's live at the apartment, police said.

Bernard suffered lacerations to his head, face and arm, according to arrest papers.

Shaw was arraigned Wednesday in front of Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker, who ordered him jailed on \$75,000 cash bail.

7/11/2012

**Failed convenience store robber pleads guilty to 2 crimes**

sdelazio@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke man charged with attempting to rob a convenience store – and whose attempt was foiled by a clerk who chased him with a knife – pleaded guilty Tuesday.

Daniel Joseph Olshefski, 24, of Burnett Street, entered the plea before Judge Fred Pierantoni to a charge of criminal attempt to commit robbery and unrelated charges of criminal trespassing and theft.

Pierantoni said Olshefski, who was represented by attorney Thomas Cometa, will be sentenced on Aug. 30.

According to court papers, on Nov. 21 Nanticoke police were called to the Cocoa Hut located on Middle Road for the

report of a robbery.

When police arrived, store employees said a man had entered the store wearing a black or dark green hooded jacket, dark pants, black sneakers and a mask over his face with the eyes and mouth cut out and had on black gloves.

A clerk said that the man, later identified as Olshefski, demanded money at least three times, and that the clerk told him he wasn't getting any money.

The clerk grabbed a knife and began to chase Olshefski out of the store into nearby woods.

When interviewed by police, Olshefski said he tried to rob the store to get money to support his drug addiction.

In the burglary incident, police said Cynthia Lynn Eckhart reported to police on Jan. 3 that someone entered her home and stole a gold bracelet.

Eckhart told police she had several people at her home over the holidays, including Olshefski, who she said burglarized her home in the past to support a heroin habit.

Eckhart said she didn't report the theft because Olshefski went to a rehabilitation center to detoxify, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said they located Eckhart's pawned bracelet, and that they spoke to Olshefski about the incident.

Olshefski allegedly told police he did take the bracelet so that he could sell it to buy drugs, according to the criminal complaint.

County Senior Judge Hugh Mundy on Tuesday released Olshefski from the county prison on parole stemming from a simple assault charge.

Olshefski originally was sentenced to one year probation in the case, in which his mother reported to Newport Township police in January 2011 that Olshefski assaulted her. He violated the terms of his probation when he burglarized Eckhart's home and failed to follow conditions, according to court papers.

Olshefski was resentenced in February to six to 12 months in county prison.

7/11/2012

### **Rental property tenant arrested in Nanticoke**

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police Tuesday night arrested Benyall I. Richardson, the tenant of a Nanticoke rental property where two homicide suspects were captured Saturday.

Richardson, 30, who rented the Rear 178 E. Ridge St. home for several months, was wanted for assaulting a woman and for violating protection-from-abuse orders filed by two different women, police said.

The warrants are not related to the homicide case, police said.

Police, his landlord and neighbors say Richardson was not home when police conducted a raid early Saturday to capture the murder suspects. He had not been home seen since.

Authorities said they are not sure whether Richardson allowed the suspects to stay with him or if he sub-leased it to them.

Richardson was arrested Tuesday night at an apartment building in the 300 block of South Hanover Street in Nanticoke and later arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker, who ordered Richardson jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on \$150,000 bail.

7/9/2012

### **HALF BROTHERS CHARGED IN PLYMOUTH HOMICIDES**

SARA POKORNY and JERRY LYNOTT - Times Leader

NANTICOKE – After Shawn Hamilton and his half brother, Sawud Davis, fled a Plymouth apartment where police said they shot and killed three people and critically wounded a fourth person Saturday night in a drug deal, the pair visited a cousin recovering from a gunshot wound in the same hospital where the sole survivor was undergoing emergency medical treatment.

Hamilton, 18, and Davis, 16, of Philadelphia, were arrested early Sunday morning at a residence in the rear of 178 East Ridge St., Nanticoke, not far from where each one was later arraigned on three counts of criminal homicide in the shooting deaths of Bradley James Swartwood, 21, Nicolas Robert Maldonado, 17, of 401 First St., Plymouth, and 15-year-old Lisa Abaunza of Duryea.

Autopsies will be conducted today.

Maldonado's older brother, 19-year-old Danny, was in critical condition at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center.

Hamilton and Davis were charged with attempted homicide in connection with the surviving victim.

Autopsies will be conducted today.

The shooting allegedly occurred when the younger Maldonado attempted to reach for packets of heroin shown to him by Davis.

Davis pulled a .40-caliber pistol from his waistband and shot Maldonado, police said.

Hamilton told police Davis said "he couldn't leave any witnesses" and fired between eight to 10 more shots.

District Justice Donald Whittaker committed Hamilton and Davis to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail.

They said nothing as they were heckled while being led from their preliminary arraignment Sunday afternoon.

Their arrests capped a feverish 11 hours for investigators and quelled fears the gunman was still loose and a danger to the public.

Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis, who was at the apartment building on the corner of First and Orchards streets with investigators on Saturday, said all resources would be dedicated to the case.

"Everybody cares about their community, and when they hear of something this tragic occurring it's just a shock to everybody, and it's very emotional," said Salavantis.

"Right now my condolences go out to the families, they are what I'm thinking of right now," she said.

She reiterated the position of investigators that the shooting was not connected to one Friday afternoon on Jay Street, Wilkes-Barre. The victim, 22-year-old Kenyatta Hughston, was shot in the head and listed in critical condition at Geisinger Wyoming Valley. No arrest has been made in the Wilkes-Barre shooting.

Police said Hamilton told them Hughston was the cousin of him and Davis.

"I can say right now that there is no evidence in our hands that can say the two are connected at this point in time," said Salavantis.

"Obviously there are questions out there with one occurring 24 hours before the other. We're doing everything in our power to make sure we find out what happened in Wilkes-Barre as well."

**A mother's questions**

Despite the lack of stated evidence by the district attorney, Bradley Swartwood's mother, Jody, said, "We have a lot questions."

She sat with family and friends at her home in Glen Lyon and talked about her son.

"He was a little rough around the edges," she said, acknowledging his run-ins with police.

Swartwood was awaiting trial on drug charges in Luzerne County Court.

Her son loved skateboarding and was taking courses at Luzerne County Community College and planning to study business, she said.

He was without a permanent address and was just staying at the First Street apartment, she said. They spoke three days before the shooting.

"He called to see how me and the kids were doing," she said. Swartwood has two brothers and a sister.

His mother said she last met her son two weeks ago in Nanticoke.

Her son knew the Maldonado brothers and went to school with them, she said. Swartwood and Danny Maldonado II were 2010 graduates of John S. Fine High School in Nanticoke. Previously they attended Wyoming Valley West.

"He was a rough around the edges, but he was harmless," she said.

Danny Maldonado became a father on June 1. According to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center's birth reports, Maldonado and Ashley Bryant had a daughter on June 1.

The mailbox at the First Street apartment had the names Bryant – Maldonado on it.

Barbara Abaunza, the mother of Lisa Abaunza, declined comment when contacted Sunday afternoon. Her daughter graduated from eighth grade at St. Mary's Assumption School in Pittston last year. She attended Scranton Preparatory School.

**In the police affidavits**

What happened in Plymouth was detailed in affidavits prepared by state trooper Charles Prula and county Det. Lt. Gary Sworen:

Plymouth police responded to a report of shots fired in a residence at 401 First St. around 7:36 p.m. and two black males seen leaving the scene.

Officers arrived and met a witness who said he heard shots fired and through an opening in a front door window saw a male lying on the floor.

Police saw the male, later identified as Nicolas Maldonado, in a pool of blood. They went into the apartment and found a male on the floor in the bedroom, Abaunza in the living room area and a male later identified as Swartwood

underneath an air conditioning unit. All had gunshot wounds. Emergency medical personnel attended to Swartwood, who was still alive.

The apartment smelled of marijuana and police saw some and a scale commonly used in street level drug trafficking in the residence.

Swartwood, Abaunza and Nicolas Maldonado were later pronounced dead by acting county coroner William Lisman. Shortly after midnight police interviewed Brandon Ginther, no age or address available, who admitted to driving Hamilton and Davis to the Plymouth apartment.

Ginther, who was not charged, said Hamilton called him for ride between 5 and 6 p.m. Saturday. He met Hamilton and Davis in Nanticoke and Hamilton said he wanted to buy a gun. They drove around, but the gun shops they visited were closed. They later drove back to Nanticoke and picked up Swartwood and one of the Maldonado brothers. Ginther did not want to stick around and dropped off Hamilton, Davis and the other two passengers at the First Street apartment. Ginther got a call from Hamilton short time later telling him to "hurry up" and he picked up Hamilton and Davis who were walking on West Shawnee Avenue.

They drove to the Wyoming Valley Mall, where Hamilton and Davis went shopping in Macy's men's store. Hamilton came out wearing new clothes and they next went to the Finish Line store. A clerk there noticed what appeared to be blood on one of Hamilton's shoes and asked about it. Hamilton said he spilled juice on it and bought a new pair. He put the old pair in the box of the pair he just bought and they left the store.

They drove back to Nanticoke, where Hamilton and Davis went to their apartment. Ginther later drove them to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center to visit a patient.

During Hamilton's interview at the state police barracks in Wyoming he said he knew Swartwood as "Wuz" and Nicolas Maldonado as "Cannon." Hamilton previously bought marijuana from Swartwood.

Before the shooting Hamilton paid Swartwood \$250 for a 1/2 ounce of marijuana and went with him into the Plymouth apartment to get it.

During the exchange Davis pulled out bundles of heroin to show Swartwood, and Nicolas Maldonado reached out. At that point Davis shot Maldonado. Hamilton said he did not want to be involved and told the same to Davis, who then shot the others.

Hamilton and Davis left the apartment and met up with Ginther and went to the mall to shop for clothes and sneakers. After buying the clothes, Hamilton threw his old jeans and shirt into a garbage can in the center of the mall.

Police searched the East Ridge Street residence of Hamilton and Davis and recovered a .40-caliber Smith and Wesson pistol, and a pair of size 11 1/2 white Nike sneakers with suspected blood on them in a bag in the kitchen.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled for 10 a.m. July 18 for Hamilton and Davis.

7/9/2012

### **Brothers suspected of Plymouth triple homicide**

By Elizabeth Skrapits (Staff Writer) - Citizens Voice

Police say two teenage brothers brutally shot three people dead and critically wounded a fourth, allegedly because they didn't want to leave witnesses to a drug deal.

Shawn James Hamilton, 18, and Sawud Davis, 16, face three counts of criminal homicide in the deaths of 15-year-old Lisa Abaunza of Duryea and Bradley James Swartwood, 21, and Nicolas Robert Maldonado, 17, both of 401 First St., Plymouth, where the shooting occurred. Hamilton and Davis are charged with attempted homicide in the critical wounding of Nicolas Maldonado's brother Danny Maldonado II, 19, who also lived at 401 First St.

"Obviously they're all victims in this situation. Yes, they may have gone into a drug deal, but they still were individuals who should never have been murdered," Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis said of the victims during a press conference after Hamilton and Davis' arraignment on Sunday.

The brothers, originally from North Dover Street in Philadelphia, were staying in an apartment rented by Benyell Richardson at Rear 178 E. Ridge St. in Nanticoke. Davis, who is being charged as an adult, is in a juvenile detention center, state police said. His older brother is in Luzerne County Correctional Facility without bail.

"Right now my condolences go out to the families. They are who I'm thinking about right now," Salavantis said. "This is very emotional. You think of these individuals, these kids whose lives are over now, and you really can't say anything more."

Abaunza, Swartwood and the Maldonados were shot just after 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Police said later that evening, after the murders, Hamilton and Davis called a friend to drive them to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township, where their cousin, 22-year-old Kenyatta Hughston, remained in what Salavantis said is "seriously critical"

condition on Sunday.

Hughston was shot twice in the head while walking on Jay Street, Wilkes-Barre, around 12:35 p.m. Friday. The incident is still under investigation, but police believe Hughston knew the person who turned the gun on him. Police haven't found a tie to the Plymouth shootings.

"There isn't evidence in our hands that we can say the two are connected at this point in time," Salavantis said. "But obviously there are questions out there: one occurred maybe 24 hours before the other. We are doing everything in our power to make sure we find out what happened in Wilkes-Barre as well."

According to arrest papers, police arrived at the three-story building at First and Orchard streets in Plymouth at 7:43 p.m. Saturday. A witness said he heard shots and saw two men run from one of the apartments.

Inside, a scene of carnage greeted officers Jeffrey Fox and Anthony Gorey.

One man lay in a puddle of blood in the kitchen. In the living room, a girl was facedown on a mattress on the floor, a pillow and the wall stained with blood. In the bedroom was another man with a gunshot wound to the head. Yet another victim lay beneath a window air conditioning unit - but this one was still alive. Medics tended to him at the scene and rushed him to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center for further treatment.

Shortly before 10:30 p.m. Saturday, acting Luzerne County Coroner William Lisman pronounced Nicolas Maldonado, Abaunza and Swartwood dead from gunshot wounds. Danny Maldonado remained hospitalized Sunday in critical condition.

Brandon Ginthner told investigators he dropped off Hamilton, Davis, Swartwood and one of the Maldonado brothers at the Plymouth apartment some time between 7 and 8 p.m. on Saturday.

When he picked up Hamilton and Davis shortly afterwards, he took them to the Wyoming Valley Mall where the two brothers bought new clothing and sneakers to replace theirs.

After stopping at the apartment in Nanticoke where Hamilton stashed his apparently blood-soiled sneakers and hoodie, Ginthner drove him and Davis to Geisinger to visit Hughston, then took them back to the apartment.

Hamilton told state police he had arranged with Swartwood, who he knew as "Wuz," and Nicolas Maldonado, who he knew as "Cannon," to buy marijuana and sell them heroin. Hamilton said he paid Swartwood \$250 for half an ounce of marijuana on the way to Plymouth.

In the apartment, Davis pulled out bundles of heroin to show Swartwood. But when Nicolas Maldonado reached towards the drug, Davis took a .40-caliber Smith and Wesson pistol from his waistband and shot him, Hamilton said. Hamilton said he didn't want to be involved, but Davis replied that he couldn't leave any witnesses. Hamilton told police he walked into the kitchen and heard eight or 10 gunshots in quick succession. Davis grabbed some marijuana from a table, handed it to Hamilton and the brothers left the apartment together.

When police executed a search warrant at the Nanticoke apartment, they found the pistol used in the shootings on a mini-refrigerator next to Hamilton's bed. They also found two pairs of bloodstained sneakers.

Police arrested Hamilton and Davis in Nanticoke on Sunday and they were arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker.

"Why wasn't it like this when I got shot in Nanticoke?" Hamilton wondered aloud as Whittaker, Salavantis and other law enforcement officials conferred behind closed doors.

Hamilton referred to an Aug. 27, 2010 incident in which he was shot in the lower leg after a scuffle for a gun with Michael Rentko. The two had been arguing over an alleged plot to rob Hamilton, identified by police at the time as a heroin dealer.

The preliminary hearing for Hamilton and Davis is scheduled for 10 a.m. July 18 in front of Whittaker.

State police at Wyoming and the Luzerne County District Attorney's office were assisted by police from Plymouth, Nanticoke, Courtdale and Edwardsville.

"Everybody worked around the clock, put a lot of time and energy into this, to see that we caught the suspects in the shooting," Salavantis said. "Because it's still an ongoing investigation, we may find out more."

7/1/2012

**Police Blotter**

Citizens Voice

Hanover Township police, assisted by Nanticoke police, responded to a report of kids drinking and smoking weed behind the Front Street Park. When authorities arrived at the scene, several people fled. Police said they caught one juvenile, who had several bottles of beer, suspected marijuana and drug paraphernalia, and they will file charges.

6/28/2012

### **Police Blotter**

Times Leader

Police are investigating damage done to landscape solar lights on three properties sometime between Sunday night and Monday morning. Nicole Falkowski and John Zegarski of the 200 block of Pine Street and Barbara Antolik of the 200 block of Mosier Street reported damaged lights. Police said they are reviewing security camera footage showing a tall, white teenage boy causing the damage. Anyone with information about the damage is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 570 735-2200.

6/28/2012

### **Woman turns dogs loose at radio station, allegedly kicks cop**

Matt Bufano

A Nanticoke woman let her dogs run loose through the radio station 98.5 KRZ on Monday, then later kicked a Pittston Township police officer in the chest, according to charges filed.

Police say Stephani Smith, 24, arrived at the KRZ building on state Route 315 in Pittston Township and asked to use the rest room. After being allowed entry by an employee, Smith held the door open and allowed her two dogs inside the facility, police said.

A manager then called 911 after seeing Smith and the dogs wandering around the building, police said. Smith voluntarily exited when asked to leave, police said.

When police arrived at the building, Smith was in her car in the parking lot. Police told Smith she was under arrest after she refused to tell police her name and why she was at the radio station, police said.

After the officer opened the door to arrest Smith, she began screaming at and pushing the officer, police said. Smith then tried to run away from police, but was promptly caught and arrested. Smith then became combative, according to arrest papers, and flung her legs in the direction of the officer, striking him in the chest.

While in custody, Smith told police "there were people in the radio telling (me) to go to the radio station," according to arrest papers. Police said Smith told the officer she had been drinking wine prior to the incident.

Smith was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, harassment, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

Magisterial District Judge Diana Malast ordered Smith jailed, but she was released shortly after on \$5,000 bail.

6/26/2012

### **W-B man charged with robbing Nanticoke pharmacy at gunpoint**

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A shotgun-toting man demanding powerful painkillers robbed a century-old Nanticoke pharmacy Monday afternoon, later claiming the brazen daylight holdup was a desperate attempt to help his mother with mounting bills, police said. Investigators say Mark S. Benjamin Sr. entered Spotanski's Pharmacy on Prospect Street around 12:40 p.m., stormed past the front counter and pointed a concealed double-barrel shotgun at the stunned pharmacist.

"He said, 'Give me your painkillers.' I just happened to have something sitting out. I gave it to him," recalled pharmacist Kathy Smith. "He said, 'Is that all?' I said, 'That's all there is.' And away he went. It was that fast."

Benjamin first demanded potent fentanyl patches before settling for a half-filled bottle of oxycodone, Smith said.

Smith described the holdup as a quick, "in and out" heist - the lone customer in the store didn't even know it happened. The getaway was short-lived, too.

Nanticoke police said Benjamin, 40, of North Sherman Street, Wilkes-Barre, parked his pickup truck in view of a city-owned surveillance camera attached to the rear of a next-door doctor's office, which captured video of him fleeing the robbery. During his hurried exit, he also came face-to-face with the doctor's wife, who spotted him flee holding a garbage bag concealing the weapon, police say.

Investigators alerted area police departments to be on the lookout for the vehicle - a newer-model charcoal-colored Nissan Frontier pickup truck. A Hanover Township police officer soon stopped the truck on South Main Street in Hanover Township in front of the American Red Cross building.

Police had their man. Investigators spotted the stolen pill bottle in plain view behind the driver's seat of Benjamin's truck, according to arrest papers.

They'd have to go to Benjamin's mother's home in Nanticoke to find the gun, which was loaded, in a trash bag, and stashed underneath a bed in a spare bedroom, police say.

Benjamin briefly visited his mother's home following the robbery to change his clothes and hide the gun, which had its stock removed, police said. He told her to deny he was there Monday if anyone came looking for him, arrest papers say. Charged with robbery, theft and possessing a prohibited offensive weapon, Benjamin was arraigned Monday evening by Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke, who ordered Benjamin jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$100,000 cash bail.

A puzzling part is Benjamin has no criminal history, police said.

Benjamin told investigators he planned to sell the stolen medication for money to help his mother pay bills, that she was falling deep in debt.

Tearful at times while waiting for his arraignment, Benjamin repeatedly asked family members about his mother and tried to rationalize how he got where he was: in handcuffs, in a courtroom, facing serious charges, and going to prison. "I couldn't stand to see her go down like she did," Benjamin remarked. "I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't."

As for Spotanski's, the store reopened minutes after the robbery - which didn't seem to shake the bright spirits of Smith and the two other employees.

"What are you going to do? This is a business. We have to be open," Smith explained. "It happened so quickly that we didn't have time to be scared."

Concerned customers called throughout the day and were relieved to hear the pharmacy remained open - and the three familiar faces who work there were OK.

Spotanski's, which Smith said opened about 100 years ago, has been owned by pharmacist Joseph Edmundowicz since the early 1960s. She's now the pharmacist in charge.

Competing against the retail chains and keeping old customers is difficult enough for independent, family-owned pharmacies without having to deal with threats of robberies, Smith said.

"It's really hard for the small pharmacies to survive in this day in age," she said.

6/26/2012

### **Arrest made in Nanticoke pharmacy robbery**

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Police on Monday arrested a Wilkes-Barre man after he allegedly entered a Nanticoke pharmacy with a shotgun and demanded pain killers.

Nanticoke police charged Mark Steven Benjamin Sr. of North Sherman Street with three felony counts of robbery and one misdemeanor count each of theft by unlawful taking and prohibited offensive weapons.

According to court papers, city police responded to Spotanski's Pharmacy at 243 Prospect St. at 12:39 p.m. on Monday for a report of an armed robbery.

Pharmacist clerk Kathy Smith told police a man entered the business and demanded fentanyl or painkillers while pointing what appeared to be a shotgun in a large garbage bag in her direction. Smith said she could see only the end of the shotgun barrel.

In fear for her life, Smith told the man she had no fentanyl but quickly gave him a bottle of generic of Oxycodone and acetaminophen tablets she had in front of her. The man took the bottle and ran from the store.

Store employee Barbara Antolick said the man ran north on South Prospect Street, and both she and Smith provided a detailed description, which investigators had Luzerne County 911 broadcast.

Investigators reviewed surveillance footage owned by the city of Nanticoke and determined the suspect entered a charcoal gray Nissan Frontier pickup. They had 911 broadcast a supplement to the description.

Shortly afterward, investigators were notified by Hanover Township police that they stopped a man who fit the description of the robbery suspect on Middle Road near the entrance to Hanover Industrial Park.

Investigators arrived at the scene and found it was Benjamin who was stopped and that he matched the description of the robbery suspect except for the color of his shirt. They also found pills matching the description Smith provided behind the driver's seat of the pickup, which was owned by Benjamin's mother, Eleanor Benjamin, of Nanticoke.

Investigators said Mark Benjamin confessed that he committed the robbery "because of economic reasons," that he was sorry and that he intended to sell the pills. He told police he hid a "broken shotgun" under a bed in a spare bedroom of his mother's house in Nanticoke, changed his shirt and hid that and a baseball cap in the Nissan.

Eleanor Benjamin consented to a search of the spare bedroom and investigators recovered a loaded shotgun with no stock under the bed. They found a shirt, baseball cap, sunglasses and a broken piece of shotgun in the Nissan.

Benjamin was arraigned before District Judge Donald Whittaker, who scheduled Benjamin's preliminary hearing for 1 p.m. July 3. Benjamin was lodged at Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$100,000 cash bail. A woman who sat behind Benjamin at the hearing told Whittaker that Benjamin had been in a car accident and was on prescription medications. She asked the judge about Benjamin having access to the medication at the prison. Whittaker told her she could go to the prison and talk to medical staff there about the situation.

6/21/2012

### **Police News**

Times Leader

Two men accused with stealing items from vehicles waived their right to preliminary hearings before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Wednesday.

Jamar David Moore, 24, of Robert Street, and Maurice Johnson Jr., 32, of East Union Street, both in Nanticoke, waived charges of theft, receiving stolen property and loitering and prowling at night to Luzerne County Court.

Police withdrew a second count of theft and receiving stolen property and possessing instruments of crime against Moore and Johnson.

Police allege Moore, Johnson and Michael Buckley, 20, of East Washington Street, Nanticoke, were stealing items from vehicles on West Ridge, West Noble and South Hanover streets on May 17, according to the complaint.

Buckley is charged with two counts each with theft and receiving stolen property and one count each with loitering and prowling at night and possessing instruments of crime. A preliminary hearing has not been scheduled for Buckley.

6/21/2012

### **Guilty plea entered for many counts**

### **Boyfriend of Cara Asay, of Nanticoke, also pleads guilty to charges.**

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A Nanticoke woman charged in a slew of crimes she allegedly committed, including breaking into the home of a deceased man and stealing items from another home while high on bath salts, pleaded guilty Wednesday to related charges.

Cara Asay, 29, entered the plea to three counts of theft and one count each of retail theft, access device fraud, receiving stolen property and criminal conspiracy.

Asay's boyfriend, Bradley Everett, 27, also of Nanticoke, entered guilty pleas Wednesday to charges relating to some of the crimes.

Luzerne County Senior Judge Joseph Augello said the duo will be sentenced on July 19, when they may also enter guilty pleas to a burglary on Christmas Eve in which police say they took items from a Newport Township home they later returned to area businesses for gift cards or cash.

According to court papers, Asay's spree began on Nov. 20 when she broke into the home of a Glen Lyon man who had died and took change, a spoon, a latex glove and three \$1 bills.

An officer said that while fingerprinting Asay, he noticed an infection in her arm. Asay was taken to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, where it was learned, according to court papers, that a broken needle tip was in her arm.

Nine days later, police said Asay entered the Price Chopper in Edwardsville and tried to take \$179 in merchandise.

Police said Asay told them she intended to resell the items to get money to buy drugs.

Police said that on Dec. 14, Asay and Everett were staying at a Penn Avenue, Exeter, home and stole \$2,705 in items, including jewelry and several electronics.

Two days later, police said, Asay and Everett were at the Turkey Hill in Exeter, where they removed a debit card from a woman, and used the card to make purchases of more than \$300.

On Dec. 18, police said, Asay entered the Family Dollar in Exeter and stole the wallet of a cashier who was working there.

On Wednesday, Everett pleaded guilty to charges of criminal conspiracy and theft stemming from the Family Dollar incident and the incident at the Penn Avenue, Exeter, home.

Asay and Everett, who are represented by attorney Allyson Kacmarski, were arraigned on June 13 in the Christmas Eve burglary and may tentatively enter guilty pleas at their July sentencing date, when they would also then be sentenced for that crime.

Everett may also enter an additional guilty plea in the Dec. 16 debit card incident.

6/21/2012

### **Lawsuits in tavern slashing go forward**

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A Luzerne County judge on Wednesday denied a request to have two lawsuits thrown out that stem from a New Year's Day slashing at a Nanticoke bar.

Judge Thomas Burke turned away preliminary objections filed by Paul Halliday, named in the suit as a defendant along with his bar, the Prospect Street Café, and his attorney, Michael Yelen.

Ricky Wells and Jennifer Mieczkowski allege the bar and Halliday were negligent the night they both were injured at the bar. Wells alleges he was beaten with a pool stick, while Mieczkowski says her face was slashed by an underage patron during the New Year's Eve, 2010 incident.

No criminal charges have yet been filed.

Halliday said in his March filing the suits should be thrown out because the suits do not list an allegation that Halliday was "in possession or control" of the bar at the time of the incidents.

"An owner of land is not liable for defective condition(s)," Halliday's filing says. "(The suits) never allege (Halliday) acted in an individual capacity in regard to any cause of action."

Mieczkowski claims in her suit that the bar and Halliday were negligent for allowing inside a person who Mieczkowski claims injured her, despite the fact the person was under the legal drinking age, and that employees did nothing to stop the attack.

Mieczkowski alleged a woman slashed her face after Mieczkowski went to the aid of a friend who fell off a bar stool.

Wells alleges in his suit that he and Mieczkowski were at the tavern to pick up beer to take out when they saw some friends and decided to sit down with them and order a drink.

Wells says he was assaulted outside the bar when he tried to intervene in the altercation involving Mieczkowski.

Burke also rejected a request by Mieczkowski and Wells, who were seeking to prevent Halliday from requesting the lawsuits be thrown out because he didn't file court papers on time to do so.

6/13/2012

### **Alleged accomplice waives her hearing**

#### **Police: Ashley Evans, 22, aided William Gronosky after he shot at an officer.**

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A woman city police say helped William Gronosky escape capture after he allegedly "blasted away" at a pursuing police officer waived her right to a preliminary hearing in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on Tuesday.

Ashley Evans, 22, of Nanticoke, waived charges of hindering apprehension and obstruction of justice to Luzerne County Court.

City police allege Evans picked up Gronosky, 29, her live-in boyfriend, after he abandoned a stolen Ford Focus near Thornhurst, Lackawanna County, and gave him a ride to a Park Avenue residence in Wilkes-Barre on March 26.

A city police officer was chasing Gronosky after a reported home invasion on Church Street, Hanover Township, where township police say he stole the Ford. During the pursuit, Gronosky "blasted away," emptying two clips at the officer, according to charges filed.

Gronosky is scheduled for a preliminary hearing in July on charges related to the shooting.

The alleged incident was one of several involving Gronosky, Evans and others from March until his arrest on April 15.

- State police at Wyoming allege Gronosky and Kevin Williams, 29, of Philadelphia, robbed at gunpoint the Carousel Lounge adult club on Route 11, Plymouth Township, on March 15. Courtney Sadusky, 24, of Bear Creek, was charged with being the getaway driver.
- State police allege Sadusky gave Gronosky a ride to burglarize a state police trooper's house in Laflin on March 22-23.
- Hanover Township police charged Gronosky and Evans for their alleged roles in robbing a disabled man during a home invasion and stealing the Ford Focus on March 26. Township police also charged Amanda Shoemaker, 27, and Amber Massey, 24, both of Wilkes-Barre, with providing information about the disabled man to Gronosky.
- During a pursuit with a city police officer on March 27, police say Gronosky fired multiple rounds at the pursuing officer in Bear Creek Township. Gronosky called Sadusky and Evans during the pursuit, telling the two women he wasn't going to jail and was planning to "shoot it out" with police.

- State police charged Evans with coercing a friend to give Gronosky a rented Chevrolet Cruze, which was parked near the Carousel Lounge on April 13. Gronosky fired at least two shotgun blasts at a trooper when he was spotted leaving in the Chevrolet.
- Gronosky and Williams were captured by Montgomery Township police when they were spotted inside a convenient store in Montgomery County on April 15.

5/22/2012

### **Two men jailed after Turkey Hill robbery**

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Two fugitives wanted on failure to appear at court proceedings were apprehended while city police investigated a robbery at the Turkey Hill on Carey Avenue early Tuesday morning.

Police said Damon Millan, 22, of West Grove Street, Nanticoke, loitered near the Turkey Hill before he entered the store and demanded money from the clerk at about 12:45 a.m.

Millan told the clerk he was forced into robbing the store, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said Millan fled the store with cigarettes when the clerk told him the cash register was locked.

Hanover Township police detained Millan and David Hermanofski, 25, at a residence on Dexter Street shortly after the robbery.

Police said cigarettes stolen from the Turkey Hill were allegedly found inside the house, the criminal complaint says.

Millan was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges of robbery and theft. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

Millan and Hermanofski were wanted on arrest warrants for their failure to appear for court hearings on unrelated charges, according to court records.

Hermanofski was jailed at the county correctional facility on the arrest warrant.

5/19/2012

### **Boys charged with torching garage**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police say two juveniles, 11 and 14, lit the raging fire that destroyed an Arch Street garage Thursday afternoon and almost spread to a nearby home.

Police say the 11-year-old has a history of lighting fires, having been charged in previous Nanticoke arsons, including a home on Coal Street last year.

The boy was arrested Thursday night and held in a Northampton County juvenile detention center to await a detention hearing Friday in Luzerne County court. At the juvenile court hearing, a judge ordered the boy detained pending further court action, police said.

Following his prior arrest, the boy was enrolled in a program to rehabilitate arsonists, police said.

Juvenile arson charges were also filed against the 14-year-old, who was released to his family, police said. The teenager did not have a prior record, police said.

Nanticoke fire officials said the garage was engulfed in flames upon arrival around 2:45 p.m. The garage is next to a home that was vacant since being damaged by flooding in September. Fire officials say crews focused much of their attention on protecting the home before attempting to extinguish the garage fire.

The garage contained a motorboat that the owners were planning to sell, officials said.

The family that owns the garage also operates a beer distributor across the street. Surveillance footage from the beer distributor showed the boys hanging out in front of the property, riding scooters, prior to the fire. At one point, the boys even approached workers of the business to ask for the time, officials said.

The Luzerne County District Attorney's Office declined comment about the 11-year-old's case, citing a law barring prosecutors from speaking about juvenile proceedings for defendants under the age of 14. A prosecutor said the office was not yet involved in the 14-year-old's case.

5/14/2012

### **Nanticoke man allegedly attacks police who tried to arrest him**

Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke man faces charges after allegedly attacking police when they tried to arrest him for domestic violence assault.

Joseph Charles Holminski, 49, is charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

According to the criminal complaint, Holminski's ex-girlfriend Kim McDonnell told Nanticoke police on May 8 that Holminski choked her over "stupid (expletive)" after they had been drinking. McDonnell's daughter saw Holminski choking her mother and yelled at him to leave her alone.

As police were arresting Holminski, he asked them what the (expletive) they were doing, then with his shoulder pushed Sgt. Brian Williams into Officer Amos Vanderhoff and charged at Williams.

A scuffle ensued, after which the officers told Holminski he was under arrest and had to come with them. Holminski asked them "who the (expletive) do you guys think you are?" When the officers attempted to escort Holminski to the police vehicle, Vanderhoff told him to "stop trying to be a tough guy." Holminski charged at Williams, trying to get at Vanderhoff.

The officers managed to get Holminski down on a couch in the living room, during which time Williams injured his right hand and wrist. Holminski continued to struggle with and kick at the officers until Vanderhoff stunned him in the leg in an attempt to get him under control. Holminski fought with officers again and they had to stun him again to get him into the police car and take him to headquarters.

Holminski was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Andrew Barilla Jr., who imposed \$5,000 cash bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 1 p.m. May 16.

5/14/2012

### **Pool thieves dive into trouble at two Walmart stores**

Citizens Voice

A Bear Creek woman and Nanticoke man went off the deep end when they allegedly tried to steal a large pool from one Walmart and return it at another, according to police.

Tabetha Gillispie, 36, and Eric Hunter, 41, each face a charge of retail theft in the incident, which occurred Wednesday. An employee at the Walmart in Pittston Township told police that a man and a woman exited the store with a shopping cart containing a large pool valued at \$199.97, loaded it into a vehicle with the Pennsylvania license plate DVC-4520 and left, with the man driving.

The Pittston Township employee notified the Wilkes-Barre Township Walmart's asset protection office about the theft. Shortly afterwards, the Wilkes-Barre Township store called back to say two people were trying to return the pool at the customer service deck.

Wilkes-Barre Township police arrived and held Gillispie and Hunter for Pittston Township police and the Walmart employee to identify. Gillispie and Hunter admitted to the theft of the pool and its attempted return. Police said Gillispie has two prior convictions for retail theft, and, although Hunter does not, his driver's license was suspended.

Hunter and Gillispie were arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Andrew Barilla Jr., who imposed \$5,000 cash bail apiece. Their preliminary hearing is scheduled for 8:45 a.m. Tuesday.

5/9/2012

### **Man charged in home invasion that lead to police chase, shots fired**

Ed Lewis - Times Leader

William Gronosky got the idea of robbing a disabled man after overhearing two women talk about their former roommate, according to charges filed on Wednesday.

Township police allege Gronosky, 29, of West Church Street, Nanticoke, robbed and tied up Anthony Passetti inside Passetti's house on Church Street on March 25.

Gronosky stole more than \$8,400 in electronics from the house and Passetti's 2004 Ford Focus, which was pursued by a Wilkes-Barre police officer into Lackawanna and Monroe counties.

Police said at the time that the driver of the vehicle fired multiple shots at the pursuing officer, who was not injured.

Gronosky was arraigned by District Judge Joseph Halesy in Hanover Township on two counts each with robbery and criminal conspiracy, and one count each of robbery of a vehicle, burglary and unlawful restraint. He was remanded to the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 on the latest charges.

Gronosky has been charged with burglarizing a state police trooper's house in Laflin and robbing along with Kevin

Williams Jr., 29, the Carousel Lounge adult club in Plymouth Township.

Police also charged Gronosky's live-in girlfriend, Ashley E. Evans, 23, with criminal conspiracy for her alleged role in the home invasion in Hanover Township. She was arrested Wednesday afternoon at Gronosky's preliminary hearing before Nanticoke District Judge Donald Whittaker on the Carousel Lounge robbery charges.

Evans struggled with state police when she was arrested in front of Gronosky, who erupted in a profanity laced tirade. According to the criminal complaint:

Passetti told police he arrived home from grocery shopping at about 9:15 p.m. on March 25 and was confronted by a gunman outside. He told the gunman he has cerebral palsy, in which, the gunman said, "I know."

Passetti said his hands were tied behind him, a towel placed over his head and a sock stuffed in his mouth.

Gronosky was upset that he was sent to the house "for nothing," and repeatedly asked Passetti if he "knew anybody that would want to set him up," the criminal complaint says.

Police allege Evans gave Gronosky a ride to Passetti's house.

Gronosky was captured in Montgomery County on April 15.

He allegedly told police he decided to rob Passetti after overhearing two women talk about items inside his house. The two women formerly lived in Passetti's house, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on May 30.

5/9/2012

### **Gronosky unleashes profanity-laced tirade after girlfriend's arrest for robbery**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

It's been a wild day in court for William Gronosky.

The 29-year-old charged with multiple area crimes and suspected of shooting at police was charged this morning in connection with a March home invasion robbery that led to a 20-mile police pursuit with shots fired.

Leaving that hearing, he offered a simple "not guilty" to reporters as police led him to an awaiting cruiser.

It was a much different story when Gronosky arrived around 1:30 pm for a hearing in Nanticoke related to a strip club robbery in West Nanticoke.

Gronosky unleashed a profanity-laced tirade directed at reporters as he was led into the Nanticoke Municipal Building, shocking the many people waiting in the lobby.

Gronosky eventually was calmed and placed into Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker's courtroom.

Then Gronosky's girlfriend, Ashley Evans, showed up.

She was wanted as Gronosky's codefendant in the Hanover Township home invasion robbery.

Police arrested and handcuffed Evans in front of Gronosky, which resulted in another prolonged outburst.

He shouted multiple profanities at police saying they arrested her for no reason.

Police were forced to take Gronosky from the courtroom, walking him past citizens in the lobby who watched him hurl insults and profanities at cops. Police eventually placed him in a holding cell in the police station.

Hanover police came to arrest Evans on charges related to the home invasion robbery. She was taken to be arraigned in front of magisterial District Judge Joseph Halesey.

Gronosky is still awaiting his hearing on the strip club robbery case.

In addition to these cases, Gronosky is charged with burglarizing a state trooper's home in Laflin and is suspected of shooting at a state trooper outside the strip club.

5/1/2012

### **Nanticoke man charged with machete terrorizing**

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A man terrorized his former girlfriend and her three children by holding them captive in their apartment with a box cutter and a machete, according to charges filed.

Yajaria DeJesus claimed Benjamin Artache, 22, entered her Apollo Circle apartment Friday morning and assaulted her in front of her three children.

She alleged Artache ripped her clothing from her body and punched her in the head several times and told her not to pursue prior assault charges against him.

Police said Artache was arrested just after 11 a.m. Saturday when he attempted to escape the apartment.

Artache was arraigned Sunday by District Judge Donald Whittaker on five counts each of reckless endangerment and

unlawful restraint, four counts of kidnapping, two counts each of simple assault and terroristic threats, and one count each of burglary, criminal trespass, intimidation of a witness or victim, resisting arrest, stalking and criminal mischief. He remained jailed Monday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$150,000 bail.

Police charged Artache with simple assault and trespassing charges when he allegedly assaulted DeJesus at her apartment on April 23. He was ordered to stay out of the apartment complex.

According to the latest criminal complaint:

DeJesus claimed Artache locked her and her children in a bedroom on Friday, yelling at her not to testify or pursue the assault charges against him. She alleged Artache pointed the machete at her saying, "Someone was going to die tonight."

DeJesus said Artache spat in her face, punched her several times and smashed a soda can against her head, the criminal complaint says.

Police were notified of a domestic dispute at the apartment by a neighbor just after 11 a.m. Saturday. Police said a person in the apartment gave "non-verbal cues" signaling they were in distress.

Artache attempted to escape by jumping out a second-floor window. He was arrested when he walked down the interior stairs, police said.

Police allege in the criminal complaint Artache struggled with officers and damaged a door on the cruiser.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on May 9 before Whittaker.

4/29/2012

### **Woman charged with heroin possession**

Citizens Voice

A nosy neighbor was arrested for possessing heroin and is awaiting a May 1 hearing after she accidentally led officers into the Nanticoke apartment she was staying at.

According to records, Nichole Briggs opened the door to Apt. 1B at 203 Hanover St. to ask police officers what they were doing at 12:30 a.m. Friday. Police told her they were looking for Apt. 1B - and Briggs told them she was standing in it.

Briggs began to backpedal and reached into her pocket. Police officers feared she was reaching for a weapon and began to struggle with Briggs, who was clutching a bag of heroin.

Briggs was charged with resisting arrest, possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia and was unable to post \$75,000 bail. She's being held at Luzerne County Correctional Facility until her 9:30 a.m. hearing before Magisterial District Judge Joseph Halesy.

4/27/2012

### **Money missing from cafeteria at GNA school**

Jerry Lynott - Times Leader

Police are investigating a report of money missing from the cafeteria of the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center. School officials contacted law enforcement Thursday, said Vito Deluca, solicitor for the school district.

Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz confirmed the investigation focused on the middle school.

Shultz said Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis was notified about the missing funds.

The district attorney added that she assigned a detective from her office to work with Nanticoke police on the investigation.

They will get together early next week.

Deluca, Salavantis and Shultz all said they could not go into detail about the investigation at this time because it is in the preliminary stages.

"We may have to have an audit done," said Shultz.

Deluca added, "We're also conducting our own investigation concurrently."

4/26/2012

### **Plymouth man guilty of sex crimes**

Times Leader

A Plymouth man charged with sexually assaulting two girls was convicted Wednesday of all counts relating to the case.

Robert Caravella, 53, of Gould Street, was convicted of four counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, three counts of aggravated indecent assault of a child, three counts of contact with a minor, sexual offenses, and two counts each of corruption of minors and endangering the welfare of children.

County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley said Caravella will be sentenced on July 19. He faces a maximum of 20 years in prison on nine of the charges that are felonies of the first degree.

A jury of four women and eight men was chosen Monday, and deliberated Wednesday for about two and a half hours before delivering their verdict.

Polachek Gartley said Caravella will be evaluated by the Sexual Offenders Assessment Board and was remanded to the county prison. During opening statements to jurors, Deputy District Attorney Alexis Falvello said the younger girl was 3 years old and the other girl was 7 when the alleged assaults began. They are now 11 and 17.

Falvello said Caravella was trusted by the family and often babysat the girls.

Caravella's attorney, Andrew Katsock III, told jurors there are "two sides to every story."

Caravella has maintained his innocence since he was arrested by police in March 2011. He claimed the girls never told their mother.

Police allege Caravella separately assaulted the two girls in Nanticoke and Plymouth, and would make them watch pornography videos or look at adult magazines.

Katsock told jurors the girls were enrolled in day care and school and were never alone with Caravella from 2002 to 2005.

4/25/2012

**A man was arraigned Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges he assaulted his girlfriend.**

David Louis Wolfe, 43, address listed as homeless, was charged with simple assault and two counts of harassment. He was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Cerisa Roberts alleged Wolfe threw her to the ground several times injuring her head and knee on East Grand Street at about 9:20 p.m. Monday, according to the criminal complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on May 2 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

4/24/2012

**Testimony to begin in child sexual assault case**

Times Leader

Testimony is scheduled to begin today in the trial of a Plymouth man charged with sexually assaulting two girls at his home and at home in Nanticoke over a several year period.

Robert Caravella, 53, is facing multiple counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, endangering the welfare of children and corruption of minors in connection with alleged assaults on the girls that occurred between 2002 and 2005.

Caravella is also charged in connection with separate case involving the sexual abuse of a 13-year-old boy that is scheduled for trial in August. In that case, police say Caravella and Carol Ann Hahn kept boy isolated in their home, where he was repeatedly sexually abused over the years. Hahn is also facing charges in connection with that case and is awaiting trial.

In the case being heard this week, the two girls, then ages 10 and 15, went to police in August 2010 to report Caravella had sexually assaulted them on numerous occasions. One of the girls alleged Caravella also forced her to watch pornography.

Deputy District Attorney Alexis Falvello is prosecuting the case. Caravella is represented by attorney Andrew Katsock.

4/23/2012

**Nanticoke woman wrecks vehicle after police chase**

Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke woman crashed her sport utility vehicle in Schuylkill County after allegedly involving state police in a vehicle chase around 9 p.m. Friday.

State police at Hazleton started pursuing Kari McCoy, 23, on Interstate 81 in Luzerne County. Police followed McCoy's 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo into Schuylkill County, where McCoy left I-81, turned onto state Route 61

northbound in Frackville Borough and continued north on Route 924.

At that point police terminated the pursuit, but McCoy kept going north on Route 924, tried to get onto the exit ramp in Gilberton Borough, but was unable to negotiate a left-hand curve in the road.

McCoy's SUV left the road, struck a cable guardrail and rolled over, coming to rest on its roof on the ramp, according to state police in Frackville. Police did not say whether McCoy was injured, but they did state she was not wearing a seat belt. The Jeep sustained moderate damage.

State police are continuing to investigate the crash.

4/19/2012

### **Pregnant woman robbed**

Edward Lewis - elewis@timesleader.com

A pregnant woman said she was knocked down and robbed of nearly \$1,000 by her friends, according to charges filed. Police arrested two men and are searching for a third in connection with the robbery on Friday, and charged a woman Tuesday with providing false information to investigators.

According to the criminal complaints:

Heidi Martin, 27, who is six months pregnant, told police she was visiting Maurice Porter, 25, and Denise Vezo, 46, to drop off baby clothes at their new residence in Nanticoke. Martin did not know the location of their new residence and was meeting Vezo's son, Joshua Vezo, 23, in the area of Washington and Hanover streets to take her there.

While walking in an alley, Martin said, a masked man approached her, pointed a handgun at her head and said, "Run your pockets (expletive)."

Martin said she turned around and noticed the weapon was a pellet gun that she swatted away. She tried to run away but she said Joshua Vezo blocked her. Martin said in the complaint she was pushed to the ground and \$921 was taken from her pants before the masked man and Joshua Vezo ran away together.

Police arrested Joshua Vezo on Friday. Denise Vezo was charged with hindering apprehension after she allegedly told police Porter was not in her residence at 15 Enterprise St., where Porter was arrested on Tuesday.

Joshua Calderon, 20, surrendered Wednesday when he walked in to the Hanover Township Police Department. He was arraigned on robbery related charges and jailed at the county correctional facility for lack of \$100,000 bail. Joshua Vezo and Porter are facing charges of robbery, theft and criminal conspiracy. They were jailed at for lack of \$100,000 bail each.

Denise Vezo was jailed for lack of \$50,000 bail.

4/18/2012

### **2 men charged before**

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Two men called "armed and dangerous" by state police were once alleged to have looted a house during the Wyoming Valley-wide evacuation during last year's record flood.

City police accused William Gronosky Jr., 29, of West Church Street, Nanticoke, and Kevin Williams Jr., 29, of Philadelphia, with breaking into a house on Brookside Street on Sept. 11. They were spotted by a city officer leaving the house and running through yards before they were apprehended, according to the criminal complaints.

Gronosky and Williams stated that they were checking the house for a friend.

At the time of the alleged break-in, the Brookside area was evacuated because of flooding.

Gronosky and Williams were charged with burglary, criminal trespass and loitering and prowling at night. Those charges were dismissed at a preliminary hearing in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on Nov. 15 when the homeowner failed to appear to testify.

Police Chief Gerard Dessoie, through city spokesman Drew McLaughlin, stated in an email that the arresting officer, Stan Wychock, requested the preliminary hearing be continued when the victim was unable to attend due to employment.

A district judge denied the request, dismissing the charges "with prejudice," meaning police were prohibited from refileing the charges against Gronosky and Williams.

Gronosky and Williams were labeled by state police as being "armed and dangerous" after they allegedly robbed the Carousel Lounge adult night club at gunpoint on March 15. Gronosky was further charged with burglarizing a trooper's house in Laflin, stealing guns, ammunition and other items on March 22 into March 23, the criminal complaints say.

State police intensified their search for the two men when Gronosky allegedly fired two shots at a trooper when Gronosky was leaving the Carousel Lounge on Friday.

Gronosky and Williams were captured in Montgomery County early Sunday morning.

4/17/2012

### **Woman allegedly aided flight**

### **Cops: Ashley Evans paid woman for use of rented car used by William Gronosky Jr.**

Edward Lewis - elewis@timesleader.com

State police allege Ashley Evans paid another woman \$500 to use a rented vehicle to drive her wanted boyfriend, William Gronosky Jr., away from the area on Friday, according to charges filed.

Evans, 23, gave explicit instructions that the 2011 Chevrolet Cruze should be parked near the Carousel Lounge on Route 11 in Plymouth Township, where Gronosky, 29, allegedly fired two shots at a trooper before fleeing in the vehicle.

Details about how Gronosky took possession of the car are listed in a criminal complaint charging Evans with two counts of hindering apprehension.

She remained jailed Monday at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

Gronosky and Kevin Williams Jr., 29, of Philadelphia, were captured in Montgomery County early Sunday morning when a Montgomery Township police officer spotted the car on state Route 309. The officer learned Gronosky and Williams were considered "armed and dangerous" and watched them go into a convenient store.

Police surrounded the store and arrested Williams outside and Gronosky in the restroom. A gun was found in the vehicle, Trooper Martin Connors said.

The two men were wanted for their alleged roles in a March 15 armed robbery at the Carousel Lounge in which more than \$3,500 was stolen. Gronosky was also wanted on charges he burglarized a trooper's house in Laflin on March 22 into March 23.

Connors said Gronosky will be charged with criminal attempt to commit homicide for allegedly shooting at a trooper outside the Carousel Lounge at about 1 a.m. Friday.

According to the criminal complaint filed against Evans:

State police said the vehicle was rented from Avis Rental Co. in Avoca by a woman known to Evans.

Evans asked to use the rented car to drive Gronosky out of the area because he was wanted by authorities. Evans paid her friend \$500 to use the rented car and gave instructions to her friend to park the car behind the Carousel Lounge on Thursday night.

State police said the license plate was replaced on the rented car with one that was stolen in Columbia County.

In an unrelated case, Evans is facing a trial on May 7 in Luzerne County Court on charges she assaulted an exotic dancer in the Cabaret Lounge adult night club in Kingston on May 9, 2011.

Gronosky and Williams are charged with robbery and theft-related offenses and were jailed at the county prison for lack of \$1 million bail each.

4/16/2012

### **Fugitives are captured**

### **Shooting, theft suspects nabbed in Philly suburb**

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A man wanted for his alleged role in a robbery at an adult night club and for firing two shots at a state police trooper was captured in Montgomery County early Sunday morning.

State police said William Gronosky Jr., 29, was arrested in a restroom of a convenient store in Montgomery Township in the suburbs of Philadelphia at about 3 a.m.

Gronosky and Kevin Williams Jr., 29, were apprehended after a Montgomery Township police officer spotted a Chevrolet Cruze with a stolen license plate on state Route 309. The officer learned Gronosky and Williams were considered "armed and dangerous" after Gronosky allegedly fired two shots at a trooper near the Carousel Lounge on state Route 11 in Plymouth Township on Friday. The trooper was not injured.

Trooper Martin Connors said the officer called for backup and surrounded the store, arresting Williams when he exited and Gronosky when he was seen "peeking out of the (restroom)."

Gronosky and Williams were returned to the area late Sunday afternoon and arraigned by District Judge Donald

Whittaker in Nanticoke on multiple robbery and theft related charges. They were jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$1 million bail each.

Gronosky said he “didn’t do it” and Williams flirted with two reporters when he was escorted into the state police barracks in Wyoming and to his arraignment in Nanticoke.

Gronosky and Williams were targets of a search since the robbery at the Carousel Lounge on March 15. State police say the pair entered the adult night club wielding firearms, knocking the owner to the floor and stealing more than \$3,500 from two safes, according to the criminal complaints. State police intensified their search when Gronosky allegedly fired the shots at the trooper when he was seen leaving the same adult club at about 1 a.m. Friday.

State police on Friday arrested Gronosky’s live-in girlfriend, Ashley Evans, 23, on charges of hindering apprehension and obstruction of justice for her alleged role in attempting to hide Gronosky.

Last week, state police charged Courtney Marie Sadusky, 23, of Wilkes-Barre, alleging she drove Gronosky and Williams to the Carousel Lounge on March 15, and alleging she drove Gronosky to a trooper’s house in Laflin to burglarize, according to court and arrest records.

Gronosky and Williams are also persons of interest in a home invasion on Church Street, Hanover Township, on March 26, where the homeowner’s Ford Focus was stolen. During a pursuit on state Route 115 in Bear Creek Township and Suscon Road in Pittston Township, shots were fired at a Wilkes-Barre City police officer chasing the Ford.

Connors said additional charges will be filed as the investigation continues.

4/15/2012

### **Woman arrested in connection with Gronosky case**

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State police said Saturday they have made an arrest in connection with the search for William Gronosky Jr., the man who allegedly fired at a police during a car chase early Friday morning, but the suspect remains at large.

State police said Saturday they arrested Ashley E. Evans, 23, of West Church Street, Nanticoke, on charges of hindering apprehension or prosecution and obstruction of law or other governmental function in connection with the Gronosky case.

State police said the charges stemmed from information obtained at 1:10 a.m. Friday morning, around the same time Gronosky allegedly fired two shots at a police cruiser that was pursuing the Chevrolet Cruz Gronosky was driving. Police combed the Parsons section of Wilkes-Barre Friday morning looking for Gronosky and a woman known to him. State police said the woman is believed to be an exotic dancer at the Cabaret Lounge on Market Street, Kingston. Court records stemming from a May 2011 fight in which Evans was charged with simple assault and summary offenses indicate Evans was then employed as a dancer at the Cabaret Lounge.

State police said Evans was remanded to Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of bail.

State police also said Saturday they are continuing the search for the rented gold Chevy Cruz Gronosky was driving during the incident Friday morning, which may now be displaying a different license plate. State police said they believe vehicle is displaying a Pennsylvania license plate, number DRS-3071, which was stolen from a vehicle in Centre Township, Columbia County.

Gronosky and Kevin Williams Jr., 29, were charged last week for their alleged roles in the armed robbery at the Carousel Lounge in West Nanticoke. State police said the two men got away with more than \$3,500.

Both are still at large.

State police on Thursday charged Courtney Marie Sadusky, 23, of Wilkes-Barre, with driving the pair away from the Carousel Lounge robbery, and driving Gronosky to burglarize the trooper’s house in Laflin, according to the criminal complaints.

Sadusky told investigators she was coerced into helping Gronosky because her boyfriend owes him money for drugs, the criminal complaints say.

Gronosky and Williams are persons-of-interest in a home invasion on Church Street, Hanover Township, on March 26. Township police said the Church Street homeowner was bound inside the house and had his Ford Focus stolen. A Wilkes-Barre police officer spotted the Ford and escaped injury when the driver fired shots at the cruiser during a 25-mile pursuit that ended in Monroe County.

Anyone with information about Gronosky and Williams is asked to call state police at Wyoming at 697-2000.

4/14/2012

### **Nanticoke man charged in robbery of pregnant woman**

## Citizens' Voice

Police arrested Joshua Lee Vezo, 23, of Nanticoke on charges of robbery, theft, and criminal conspiracy after he allegedly played a part in the robbery of a pregnant woman.

Heidi Martin, 27, who is six months pregnant, told police she was going to visit friends Maurice Porter and Denise Vezo in Nanticoke around 12:50 p.m. She told police her friends had baby clothes for her. Porter told Martin he would send Denise Vezo's son Joshua Vezo to escort Martin from a hospital in Nanticoke to the friends' new house.

Martin and Joshua Vezo met and were walking in an alley near the Nanticoke hospital. When they turned a corner, they were confronted by a masked man with a gun.

The man demanded money from Martin, but she refused to hand over any cash. The gunman pointed the gun to the back of Martin's head, and she turned and smacked the gun with her hand. The gun appeared to be a plastic pellet gun. "Are you serious?" Martin asked the gunman. Then, Martin turned to escape, but found Joshua Vezo blocking her path. She turned around, but the gunman pushed her to the ground and ripped her pants, which contained \$921.

Joshua Vezo and the gunman fled, and Martin called police. Police charged Joshua Vezo with two counts of robbery, one count of theft by unlawful taking or disposition, and three counts of criminal conspiracy. The gunman has not been charged.

4/11/2012

### **Feds: Nanticoke woman filed false tax return**

Citizens' Voice

Federal authorities have charged a Nanticoke woman with filing a false federal income tax return.

Deborah Rentko is accused of filing a false tax return in March 2008 for the year before, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

The charges allege she materially and falsely underrepresented her income, U.S. Attorney Peter J. Smith said in a statement.

If convicted, Rentko faces up to three years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 and three years of supervised release.

4/9/2012

### **Shots fired during invasion**

Times Leader

No one was injured when shots were fired early Sunday during a home invasion at 309 E. Noble St., police said.

According to police:

Three males wearing dark-colored clothing and hooded sweatshirts tried to enter the apartment through the main door and then smashed a large, glass sliding door to get inside around 4:35 a.m. Two people inside the apartment yelled and one of the intruders fired a handgun multiple times before fleeing with the other men.

Nanticoke police and state police recovered shell casings at the apartment located in a complex owned by the East Side Housing Authority.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200.

3/26/2012

### **Judge denies Nanticoke man's request for shorter sentence**

Citizens' Voice

A Nanticoke sporting goods dealer can't have his sentence shortened, a federal judge has ruled.

D&R Sports Center owner Mark Komoroski is in the Federal Correctional Institution at Fort Dix, N.J., until December for conspiring to illegally ship paramilitary equipment to Russia.

He had petitioned U.S. District Court Senior Judge Edwin M. Kosik to allow him a hearing to "vacate, set aside or correct" his sentence, alleging he unjustly received a longer prison term than his co-conspirator, Russian national Sergey Korznikov, due to use of the wrong federal sentencing guidelines and ineffective counsel.

Kosik denied Komoroski's motion, stating in a decision released last week that Komoroski had not sustained the required burden of proof.

Prosecutors said Komoroski and Korznikov conspired to smuggle defense items such as rifle scopes and riot shields

from the United States to Russia without approval from the U.S. State Department.

Both men pleaded guilty, but Komoroski was sentenced on July 29, 2010, to 32 months, or 2.6 years, imprisonment, two years of supervised release and a \$10,000 fine. Korznikov was sentenced in July 2011 to six months in prison and two years of supervised release.

The argument Komoroski made during a hearing in December was that his sentence was incorrectly determined under guidelines for offenses involving national defense and weapons of mass destruction, but Korznikov's was determined using federal guidelines for economic offenses, which have lighter penalties. Komoroski alleged his attorneys didn't discuss the sentencing guidelines but instead had him plead guilty.

Komoroski acknowledged under cross-examination that his counsel told him if he was convicted of mail fraud, he could face a sentence of up to 40 years, according to the ruling. Kosik noted that the government could additionally have charged him with money laundering and smuggling, which also call for a longer sentence.

3/23/12

### **Man pleads guilty to 16 theft charges**

### **Joshua Hallas entered the plea in eight different cases before Judge David Lupas.**

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A Nanticoke man charged in a string of thefts over an 11-month period pleaded guilty Thursday to 16 related charges. Joshua George Hallas, 29, of West Ridge Street, entered the pleas in eight different cases before County Judge David Lupas. The charges included theft by unlawful taking, criminal mischief and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Lupas said Hallas will be sentenced on May 3.

According to court papers, Hallas' spree began on Dec. 27, 2010, when workers at the Walmart store in Wilkes-Barre Township observed Hallas take several DVDs and conceal them in his pants.

Over the next nine months, Hallas was charged by police in a number of incidents, mostly for stealing scrap metal from area businesses.

- March 22, 2011: Police said Hallas tried to take scrap metal from the Pennsylvania American Water Co. in Hanover Township, and an employee blocked Hallas' vehicle in until police arrived.
- May 11, 2011: Police said Hallas took metal from Tabit's Scrap Yard in Larksville where police were called to the scene. Police said they were able to stop a vehicle driven by Hallas, who was had a suspended license.
- July 26, 2011: Police said Hallas stole metal from Casey-Kasa Coal Co. in Newport Township, and he was driving with a suspended license.

Police said they could not track down Hallas immediately after they were called to the coal company.

- Aug. 17, 2011: Police said Hallas and two other men made off with approximately \$4,000 worth of metal piping from Brundage Bone Blanchett in Dorrance Township.

Police said that same day they found Hallas in possession seven hypodermic needles.

- Aug. 18, 2011: Police said Hallas took several thousands dollars worth of metal from Eclipse Fleet, on West Union Street in Nanticoke.

Police said Hallas and two other men stole the metal and sold it at a scrap yard.

- Nov. 20, 2011: Wilkes-Barre City and Township police said Hallas was driving at a high rate of speed with beer kegs in the car.

Police said the three kegs were taken from the La Tolteca restaurant on Mundy Street.

According to court documents, Hallas had been involved in 10 other cases beginning in 2002 through 2010, including theft by unlawful taking, receiving stolen property and driving under the influence.

According to court papers, Hallas' spree began on Dec. 27, 2010, when workers at the Walmart store in Wilkes-Barre Township observed Hallas take several DVDs and conceal them in his pants.

3/23/12

### **Man charged with child sex offenses**

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A Nanticoke man was arraigned Friday on charges he sexually assaulted a teenage boy.

Thomas Wydra, 25, of East Green Street, was charged with two counts each with involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, indecent assault and corruption of minors. He was arraigned by District Judge Martin Kane in Wilkes-Barre and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$20,000 bail.

City police allege Wydra sexually assaulted the boy at least twice from May 2007 to May 2009 when the boy lived on North Welles Street, according to the criminal complaint.

Wydra dated the boy's mother, police said.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on March 28 in Wilkes-Barre Central Court.

3/20/2012

**A man was arraigned Sunday on charges he stalked his ex-girlfriend and damaged a toilet in a cell at police headquarters.**

Times Leader

Stephen Michael Pivinski, 37, of Lee Park Avenue, Hanover Township, was charged with two counts each of criminal mischief and criminal trespass, and one count each of defiant trespass, resisting arrest, institutional vandalism, indecent exposure, stalking, harassment, disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

A 14-year-old girl told police Pivinski tried to enter the home on Garfield Street where his ex-girlfriend lives just before 6 p.m. Saturday. Police said they found Pivinski trying to hide on a porch.

The girl told police Pivinski was not allowed at the home.

Pivinski was placed in a cell at police headquarters, where he took off all his clothes and kicked a toilet, the complaint says.

Police restrained Pivinski with handcuffs. Pivinski banged his head on cell bars, causing an injury, according to the complaint.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on March 28 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

3/12/2012

**Police news**

Times Leader

A man accused by Plymouth police of shaking a 2-year-old girl on Feb. 24 waived his right to a preliminary hearing before District Judge Donald Whittaker on Wednesday.

Kenneth Olshefski, 32, of West Main Street, waived a reckless endangerment charge to Luzerne County Court. Police withdrew charges of endangering the welfare of a child and harassment against Olshefski.

Charges of simple assault and harassment against Richard Opalski, 50, of South Walnut Street, Nanticoke, were dismissed during a preliminary hearing on Wednesday.

Nanticoke police charged Opalski after his wife, Loretta Opalski, claimed he broke her cell phone and threw it at her, striking her head, on Feb. 28, according to the criminal complaint.

Eight counts of possession of drug paraphernalia were dismissed against Brian Engle, 26, of Bilby Hill Road, Shickshinny, during a preliminary hearing on Wednesday.

Nanticoke police alleged Engle was found with a syringe and seven empty heroin packets when he was stopped after an alleged shoplifting incident on West Main Street on Feb. 28, according to the criminal complaint.

3/9/2012

**Man arrested in apartment robbery**

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Police arrested a man they allege robbed another man at gunpoint inside a neighbor's apartment Benjamin Artache, 22, of Apollo Circle, was arraigned Thursday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges of robbery, burglary, criminal attempt to commit robbery, criminal trespass, receiving stolen property, illegal possession of a firearm and simple assault. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

According to the criminal complaint:

Shaka Diamayne told police he was in his girlfriend's apartment at 264 Apollo Circle on Wednesday when Artache entered uninvited with a handgun and a police-style baton. Diamayne alleged Artache aimed the gun at him and demanded anything of value.

Diamayne told Artache he had nothing to give him. Artache ordered Diamayne upstairs and followed him closely behind while aiming the gun at him.

Artache then left the apartment and drove away.

Police said they arrested Artache when he returned to his apartment at about 4 p.m.

A police search of Artache's apartment found a loaded .32-caliber handgun hidden under children's clothes in a dresser, the complaint says.

The gun was reported stolen to Nanticoke police in October.

Police said Artache is prohibited from carrying or owning a gun due to a conviction in Massachusetts.

3/6/2012

### **Three people arrested in drug sweeps**

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Three people were arrested in separate drug sweeps by the state Office of Attorney General's Luzerne County Drug Task Force.

Marion Gause, 44, of Myers Court, Wilkes-Barre, also known as Unique, and Nichole Lane, 42, of East Ridge Street, Nanticoke, were arrested Friday after they allegedly sold heroin in the parking lot at the Hanover Mall, Sans Souci Parkway. A search of Lane's residence uncovered heroin packets stamped "No Way Out" and "Mafia," township police said.

Gause and Lane were charged with several drug trafficking charges and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail each.

Gause is a member of the Bloods street gang, police said.

Drug agents arrested Edward Clark Pacheco, 31, also known as Q, on Monday after he allegedly sold heroin in the same parking lot. A search at Pacheco's residence on East Main Street, Nanticoke, allegedly uncovered heroin packets stamped "CVS" and "Hangover," crack cocaine, cell phones, a digital scale and a .40-caliber handgun, police said.

Pacheco was charged with multiple drug offenses and jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$50,000 bail.

3/5/2012

### **Man charged with theft from garden center arraigned**

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A Nanticoke man accused by Hanover Township police with stealing more than \$2,800 worth of items from Dundee Gardens last year was arraigned Monday.

Michael Anthony Laury, 33, last known address as East Main Street, was arraigned on two counts of theft, and unrelated counts of receiving stolen property, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and harassment. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 total bail.

Hanover Township police allege Laury stole \$2,800 worth of lawn ornaments from Dundee Gardens in early May, according to the criminal complaint.

Township police received information that the stolen items were inside Laury's residence. A search warrant was served at Laury's residence on May 20 when police recovered most of the stolen items.

Laury's girlfriend, Kyla Higgins, 23, who formerly resided at the East Main Street residence, was sentenced on Oct. 6 to six months in the county's accelerated rehabilitation program on a criminal conspiracy charge for her alleged role, according to court records.

Police alleged Higgins was acting as a look out when Laury stole the lawn ornaments from Dundee Gardens, the criminal complaint says.

3/1/2012

### **Slashing victim wants arrest in case**

### **Jen Mieczkowski says she has twice identified attacker from Jan. 1 incident.**

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On two separate occasions, Jennifer Mieczkowski said she identified the woman who slashed her face and neck with a box cutter inside the Prospect Street Cafe in Nanticoke.

With what she believes to be a positive identification of her attacker, Mieczkowski, 30, is questioning why there hasn't been an arrest.

Two months after the vicious attack in the early-morning hours on Jan. 1, Mieczkowski said her patience is wearing thin with the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office.

"I identified the girl two days after this happened," Mieczkowski said during an interview at her home on Wednesday. "And I identified her from surveillance (video) a month after it happened. As far as I'm concerned, it's done. Why haven't they arrested her?"

"I can't comment on what the victim says, but her version of the facts is not accurate," First Assistant District Attorney Sam Sanguedolce said. "We have an ethical duty to arrest the right person."

Sanguedolce said Nanticoke police recently turned over their investigation to be reviewed by an assistant district attorney. A meeting is scheduled next week with police to go over the investigation, Mieczkowski's statements to investigators and any statements made by witnesses.

Mieczkowski has returned to work as owner of a beauty salon in Nanticoke while she recovers from multiple slashes to her face and neck. Her face and neck scarred, she continues to feel discomfort from her injuries.

Her friendly personality has not missed a beat.

Mieczkowski said her distress now lies with the lack of an arrest.

"I picked the girl out of 12 photos in a lineup two days after I was attacked, and a month ago I picked the same girl out of the video," Mieczkowski said.

She said surveillance video that was shown to her is black-and-white and captured the fight that took place inside the tavern. She said the video clearly shows the attacker getting knocked to the floor, getting up to fix her hair and charging at Mieczkowski.

"She came right at me," Mieczkowski said.

She did concede she had to watch the video twice before she identified the woman.

"When I saw her, I said that is definitely her. I had them rewind it two times because it's in black and white. Once I saw her, I knew," Mieczkowski said.

Sanguedolce said the video "was not clear" regarding what actually happened inside the tavern, and raised questions among investigators.

"We're not going to file criminal charges based on the video," Sanguedolce said. "If we bring the charges and lose, we can't hope for more evidence. We only have one shot at this for trial."

Early-morning attack

Mieczkowski said she entered the tavern a little before 2 a.m. with her friend Ricky Wells to buy beer to take home. She ran into friends and decided to stay for a drink when a fight broke out, she said.

Mieczkowski said she did not realize she had been slashed until she stood up. She stayed inside the tavern for a few minutes, was given a towel by a bar employee and walked outside to find two police officers talking to a bouncer.

Surveillance video shows the alleged attacker walking outside the tavern at 2:10 a.m., Mieczkowski said.

Mieczkowski said she told the two officers her attacker was inside the tavern but was told to get into an ambulance.

Wells, who was also assaulted, was driven to a hospital by a relative.

Police interviewed many

Police said they interviewed a majority of the patrons who were in the tavern at the time of the fight. Mieczkowski estimated there were about 50 people, with some of them friends and relatives of her attacker.

She said there are other witnesses, including an employee at the tavern, who identified the same woman who attacked her.

"If one step had gone differently that night, (police) would have had her," Mieczkowski said. "I'm back to work and don't want to put my face out there; at the same time nothing is being done."

3/1/2012

**Police Blotter**

Times Leader

Police said Richard Opalski, 50, of South Walnut Street, struck his wife, Loretta, broke her cellphone and threw it at her at their residence Tuesday night.

In arrest papers filed Wednesday, police said:

Loretta Opalski said her husband was intoxicated and yelled at her in an argument about him wanting her to leave the

residence. When she refused, he broke her cellphone, threw it at her and hit her on the top of her head, possibly with his fist, causing a minor brush burn and swelling.

The broken phone was on the floor of the apartment and items were strewn about as if an altercation occurred. Richard Opalski was intoxicated and said he and his wife were talking and that nothing happened. He had scratches on his hands, consistent with a physical altercation.

Richard Opalski was charged with simple assault and harassment, arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker and released on \$5,000 bail.

3/1/2012

### **Meth suspect accused of shoplifting at Turkey Hill**

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A man accused of manufacturing methamphetamine inside a Mocanaqua house was arraigned Wednesday on charges he stole items from a store while under the influence of heroin. Police allege they spotted Brian Eugene Engle Jr., 26, and Nathan Wright, 20, staggering on West Main Street and entering the Turkey Hill just before 11 p.m. Tuesday.

Police kept watch on the two men inside the store, where they separated, with Engle pacing aisles and Wright distracting a clerk. After Engle and Wright left the store, police stopped them.

Police allege Engle removed items from his pockets that he had stolen from the store. Wright was found in possession of syringes wrapped in a bandanna, a spoon with heroin residue and two heroin packets, police allege.

Police said Engle later turned over a bag containing seven empty heroin packets and a syringe that was hidden in his underwear.

Engle is facing charges by the state Office of Attorney General that he manufactured methamphetamine inside a Mocanaqua house in January. The meth lab caught fire the night before Engle was arrested by state agents on Jan. 10, according to arrest records.

Engle was released from the Luzerne County Correctional Facility on Feb. 22, when his bail of \$50,000 was modified to unsecured bail after he waived his right to a preliminary hearing on the methamphetamine related charges, court records say.

Engle, of Bilby Hill Road, Shickshinny, was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on eight counts of possession of drug paraphernalia, and one count each of retail theft and public drunkenness. He was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Wright, address listed as homeless, was charged with four counts of possession of drug paraphernalia and a single count of public drunkenness. He was released on \$5,000 unsecured bail.

2/16/2012

### **A Nanticoke man pleaded guilty Tuesday in Luzerne County Court to entering a neighbor's home.**

Times Leader

Jamie Rodd Lohman, 38, of South Prospect Street, admitted to two counts of criminal trespassing.

Lohman will be sentenced on April 16. Lohman will be required to pay over \$9,700 in restitution costs.

Police said Lohman entered a neighbor's home through a broken window on Feb. 24, 2011. When police arrived, Lohman was exiting the home, and arrested. Police said Lohman used a hammer to break the window and his cell phone was found on the front porch.

2/10/2012

### **Prosecutors drop 'inspector' charge**

### **Donald Perkoski pleads guilty to the lesser charge of disorderly conduct.**

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A man accused of impersonating a housing inspector pleaded guilty Friday to a lesser charge.

Donald Perkoski, 70, of Edwardsville, entered the plea to a charge of disorderly conduct before County Judge Lesa Gelb.

Perkoski was charged in December 2010 after police said he identified himself as a housing inspector for the Nanticoke Housing Authority and entered a woman's apartment on a number of occasions conducting "inspections."

An agreement with prosecutors and the housing authority led to a guilty plea of disorderly conduct for approaching the

woman a number of times.

As part of the agreement, Perkoski previously moved out of his Nanticoke Housing Authority apartment, his attorney, Chris O'Donnell said Friday.

Gelb said Perkoski will be sentenced on April 3. O'Donnell said he will be asking for a probationary sentence for his client, due to health conditions. He faces a maximum of one year in jail on the charge.

Police allege Perkoski identified himself as a housing inspector to a woman when he entered her West Green Street, Nanticoke, apartment to verify a man was not residing with her in September 2009, according to the criminal complaint. The woman told investigators that Perkoski showed up at a summer cookout uninvited, saying he was there because he works for the housing authority.

Police said they met with Perkoski regarding the allegations, who said he was placed on the housing authority's fireworks committee and that he never told anyone he was conducting housing inspections, nor did he inspect anyone's home.

The woman told investigators she believed Perkoski was impersonating an inspector because he had feelings for her and was jealous of her boyfriend.

A charge of impersonating a public servant was withdrawn by prosecutors Friday.

2/9/2012

### **Cops seek Nanticoke man**

Times Leader

Nanticoke police said they are searching for Joseph A. Klesmer, 25, who is wanted in a home burglary on Perry Street on Jan. 10.

Klesmer, of Mosier Street, Nanticoke, is also accused of possessing stolen credit cards at the Walmart store in Hazle Township and a Kmart store on Jan. 11, police said.

Anyone with information about Klesmer is asked to call Nanticoke police at 735-4000 or 911.

2/8/2012

### **City police reported the following on Tuesday**

Times Leader

- Stan Sokolowski of East Ridge Street, Aaron Wright of East Union Street and John Beggs of South Hanover Street separately reported someone egged their vehicles.
- Jason Weston, of South Hanover Street, reported a global positioning system was stolen from his vehicle.
- James Kline Jr., of East Broad Street, reported four tires were slashed on his vehicle.

2/2/2012

### **Nanticoke Police Reports**

Times Leader

Charges of simple assault, disorderly conduct and harassment were dismissed against John Wolfe, 42, of Willow Street, Plymouth, during a preliminary hearing on Wednesday.

Plymouth police had accused Wolfe after his wife, Dawn Wolfe, claimed he punched her and pushed her into a wall inside their residence at 159 Willow St. on Nov. 28, according to the criminal complaint.

Charges of simple assault and harassment were dismissed against Ashley Mooney, 24, of Wilkes-Barre, and Bradley Buchanan, 26, during a preliminary hearing on Wednesday.

Newport Township police accused Mooney and Buchanan of assaulting each other during an argument in his residence on Rock Street on Jan. 22, according to the criminal complaint.

1/28/2012

### **Nanticoke man faces charges of burglary**

**John Chernowski Jr. was captured after a foot chase, police say. Bail is set at \$25,000.**

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Newport Township police charged a man they allege was targeting unoccupied houses to burglarize.

John Chernowski Jr., 27, of East Union Street, Nanticoke, was arraigned Friday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges of burglary, criminal trespass, criminal attempt to commit burglary, criminal attempt to trespass and criminal conspiracy. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$25,000 bail.

Chernowski was apprehended by Nanticoke police after a foot chase on Thursday.

Township police allege Chernowski rang door bells to determine if anyone was home. If no one answered, Chernowski walked to a rear door and attempted to open it, according to charges filed.

When homeowners confronted Chernowski at the front door, he asked if they had lost a cat, police allege.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police responded to a burglary at a house on Vista Drive at about 2 p.m. Thursday when a woman claimed someone forced their way inside and stole items.

While investigating the burglary, police learned a man, identified by police as Chernowski, attempted to force open a rear door to another house on Vista Drive.

The woman claimed she opened the front door after hearing the door bell. After finding no one on the front porch, the woman checked the rear door finding Chernowski attempting to pry it open, the criminal complaint says.

Police learned from other homeowners on Vista Drive that Chernowski allegedly rang door bells asking if they lost a cat on Thursday.

Nanticoke police spotted Chernowski in the 300 block of East Union Street.

Police said in the criminal complaint Chernowski fled on foot, throwing a knife, jewelry and other items during the pursuit. He was apprehended after a brief foot chase, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Feb. 1 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

1/26/2012

**A man was arraigned Wednesday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charged he attempted to rob the Cocoa Hut convenience store on Middle Road on Nov. 21.**

Daniel Joseph Olshefski, 24, of Burnett Street, Nanticoke, was charged with criminal attempt to commit robbery and criminal attempt to commit theft. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$40,000 bail. Police allege Olshefski concealed his face with a mask and demanded money from a clerk at the convenience store. The clerk refused to surrender money and chased Olshefski out of the store, according to the criminal complaint.

Olshefski was arrested Jan. 4 by Newport Township police on unrelated burglary charges.

Police said in the criminal complaint Olshefski on Jan. 5 admitted to attempting to rob the convenience store for money to support a drug addiction, the criminal complaint says.

1/25/2012

**Father charged with leaving children unsupervised**

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Police found three children under 8-years-old unsupervised in a residence after arresting the father on harassment and public drunkenness charges early Wednesday morning.

Julian Jay Johnson, 32, of Loomis Street, was arraigned in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on three counts of endangering the welfare of children, two counts of harassment and one count each of disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. He was jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility for lack of \$5,000 bail.

Police said the children were taken into protective custody by Luzerne County Children and Youth Services.

According to the criminal complaint:

Johnson was found intoxicated outside Tommyboys Bar and Grille on North Market Street just after 1 a.m. after he allegedly caused a disturbance inside the tavern.

Johnson was transported to police headquarters where he asked to go home because his children were there.

Police asked Johnson who was watching the children. Johnson replied, "Their with God, God is watching over them."

Police entered Johnson's house and found a toddler and a girl sleeping on a mattress, and an 8-year-old boy laying in a pile of clothes, the criminal complaint says.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Feb. 1 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

1/24/2012

**Couple charged with stealing presents on Christmas Eve to buy drugs**

Cara Asay, the woman charged last week with burglarizing a dead man's house looking for heroin money, has been charged with another cruel crime.

Asay and her boyfriend conspired to burglarize a woman's Hanover Township home on Christmas Eve, steal items and return them to stores for drug money, according to Hanover Township police.

Asay, 29, and her boyfriend, Bradley A. Everett, 27, both of Nanticoke, were charged this morning in connection with the burglary at a Lee Park Avenue home, police said.

Asay was charged with burglary, criminal trespass, theft and receiving stolen property. Everett was charged with conspiracy, theft and receiving stolen property.

Both were jailed in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$10,000 cash bail. Asay and Everett had already been jailed on previous criminal charges.

Last week, police charged Asay in connection with a break-in at a dead man's Glen Lyon home in November. She said she was coming to the home to offer him sex for money and didn't know the man died months earlier. Police said Asay broke into the Main Street home when no one answered.

1/24/2012

### **Second lawsuit filed against Nanticoke bar**

**Ricky Wells of Mountain Top says he was badly beaten in incident in which woman was slashed.**

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A second lawsuit has been filed against a Nanticoke bar and its owner in which a Mountain Top man says he was injured in a New Year's Eve incident that also resulted in the face of his friend being severely slashed.

Ricky Wells says Paul Halliday, owner of the Prospect Street Caf?, was negligent the night of the attacks in that a security guard was not properly trained and a list of barred patrons was not kept.

The suit, filed by Wells' attorney, David Selingo, on Monday, seeks unspecified damages on two counts of negligence.

The suit mirrors that of Jennifer Mieczkowski, of Nanticoke, who claimed in a suit filed Jan. 13 that the bar and Halliday were negligent for allowing inside a person who Mieczkowski claims injured her, despite the fact the person was under the legal drinking age, and that employees did nothing to stop the attack.

Mieczkowski alleged a woman slashed her face after Mieczkowski went to the aid of a friend who fell off a bar stool.

Wells' lawsuit says the tavern had been the site of nine incidents involving disturbances at or adjacent to the bar, and had received 16 citations over an unspecified period of time prior to the incident.

The suit says Halliday entered into an agreement with the state Liquor Control Board that called for him to employ a security guard, provide training and maintain a list of persons who were barred from the tavern.

Wells alleges in the suit that he and Mieczkowski were at the tavern to pick up beer to take out when they saw some friends and decided to sit down with them and order a drink.

Mieczkowski, the suit says, noticed a female friend get knocked off a bar stool, and went to her aid when she was assaulted by an attacker.

Wells says in the suit that he tried to intervene but was grabbed by a security guard and dragged outside, where he was beaten, causing several injuries.

A police report of the incident said Wells was beaten with a pool cue. The suit says Wells suffered a fractured jaw, pain, anxiety, loss of sleep and depression as a result of the attack.

The suit alleges negligence in that Halliday and the bar failed to have a security guard undergo proper training and wear proper clothing. The suit also alleges Halliday and the bar failed to enforce the barred patron list, allowed underage patrons into the bar, served those underage patrons and failed to keep the premises "under control."

Nanticoke Detective Capt. William Shultz said Monday the police are continuing the investigation and there have been no new developments.

Halliday could not be reached for comment.

Michael Yelen, an attorney who has previously represented the bar regarding its liquor license, said Monday he had no comment on any personal injury action and was unaware of the newest lawsuit.

1/19/2012

### **Nanticoke men get 7 years each for drug trafficking**

Times Leader

A federal judge on Wednesday sentenced two Nanticoke men to seven years in prison each for their guilty pleas to drug trafficking.

Marcus Holder, 24, and Michael F. Bruce, 23, conspired to distribute more than 400 grams of heroin and more than 112 grams of crack cocaine from 2009 through April 29, 2011, according to federal prosecutors.

The two men also allegedly carried guns while dealing drugs, according to federal prosecutors.

U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania Peter J. Smith said Holder and Bruce agreed to forfeit to the government \$12,469 and five guns seized by investigators during a raid on April 29, 2011.

Senior U.S. Judge Edwin Kosik ordered the two men to serve four years probation after they complete their prison sentences.

The FBI and Plains Township police investigated the case.

1/19/2012

**Nanticoke pressed to do something about bar**

**Friends and relatives of Jan. 1 bar slashing victim want pace of investigation quickened.**

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Angry about the lack of an arrest even though an alleged suspect in the brutal slashing at the Prospect Street Caf? has been identified, friends and family of the victim spoke out at Wednesday night's council meeting.

Supporters of Jennifer Mieczkowski peppered council with questions and vented their frustrations with the pace of the investigation of the Jan. 1 attack.

"What more information does anyone need to know?" asked Ashlee Mieczkowski, 25, during the public comment period at the end of the regular monthly meeting.

"We want something done," said the younger sister of the victim.

City police, the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office and the state police Bureau of Liquor Enforcement are investigating the early-morning slashing inside the crowded bar. Mieczkowski, 30, identified her attacker from a photo lineup within 24 hours and in a civil suit filed against the bar and its owner named 20-year-old Melanie Figueroa as the person who cut her about the face and neck.

Figueroa admitted being inside the bar and said she voluntarily went to speak with police, but denied attacking Mieczkowski.

Several people called for closing down the bar they said has been a trouble spot, and a representative of the Guardian Angels offered to assist police to provide an "extra set of eyes and ears" to them to make the city a safe place.

City Solicitor William Finnegan tried to explain to the people calling for the closure there is a procedure in having a bar declared a nuisance in order to shut it down. He asked for their assistance and directed them to fill out complaint forms available in the back of the meeting room to provide to the D.A.

"If no information is provided, they're going to be hard pressed to do anything," said Finnegan.

With her face still bandaged, Mieczkowski spoke out, saying she willingly went into the bar to get a 12-pack of beer to take out.

The business owner said she knows she is responsible for what goes on inside her hair salon.

"It's about how you run the business," she said.

She said the issue was not about someone seeking vengeance against the bar. "It's about the violence coming in," she added.

Council president Steve Duda agreed with her.

"Jen, you hit the nail on the head. It starts with the business owner. They got to keep order," he said.

1/18/2012

**Police blotter**

Times Leader

Thomas Michael Hischak III, 18, address listed as homeless, was arraigned Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on a charge of criminal trespass.

Nanticoke police allege Hischak entered his grandparents' house on West Noble Street without permission on Monday, according to the criminal complaint.

Hischak was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$5,000 bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Jan. 25 before District Judge Donald Whittaker.

A woman was arraigned Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre Central Court on charges she entered a residence without permission. Cara Lee Asay, 28, of State Street, Nanticoke, was charged with burglary, criminal trespass, theft, receiving stolen property and criminal attempt. She was jailed at the county prison for lack of \$10,000 bail. Township police allege Asay entered an unoccupied residence on West Main Street, stealing items on Nov. 20, according to the criminal complaint. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on Jan. 25 before District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke.

1/16/2012

**Woman denies being bar attacker**

**Melanie Figueroa, identified in lawsuit as alleged slasher, admits to being in Nanticoke bar on Jan. 1.**

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The woman identified in a lawsuit as the person who allegedly slashed another woman in the face inside a Nanticoke bar early New Year's Day said she is not the attacker.

Melanie Figueroa, 20, of Nanticoke, said she was in the Prospect Street Caf? on Jan.1, but she would not discuss what happened inside it that morning. During a brief interview Sunday she limited her comments to what happened in the days after the attack on Jennifer Mieczkowski.

Mieczkowski named Figueroa as the assailant in the suit filed Friday in Luzerne County Court against the bar and its owner Paul Halliday, alleging employees served alcoholic beverages to the underage Figueroa and did not stop the attack.

"I did talk to police. I went on my own," said Figueroa. "Because I heard people were saying I did it."

She denied attacking Mieczkowski, 30, of Nanticoke.

"Why would I go to police the day after it happened if I did it?" she asked during a 15-minute meeting at a donut shop in Hanover Township.

No criminal charges have been filed. Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz said he was not going to get in the middle of what Figueroa and Mieczkowski were saying.

"We're just going to continue our investigation, and we're going to arrest the person responsible for the crime," he said.

Figueroa said she does not know Mieczkowski and has no idea why she was singled out by her in the suit.

"I feel bad for what happened to Jen. I don't feel like anything like this should happen to anybody," said Figueroa.

Mieczkowski identified Figueroa from a photo lineup within 24 hours of the attack, said her attorney, David Selingo.

Mieczkowski declined the opportunity to comment.

Selingo said he and his client stand behind the allegations in the lawsuit and "look forward to litigating this matter to its successful conclusion."

"Ms. Figueroa will have full opportunity to present her story under oath and under the penalty of perjury in the litigation forum," Selingo added.

Figueroa indicated she plans to file a suit as a result of being named by Mieczkowski. The publicity has been harmful, and the mother of a 3-year-old child said she wanted to clear her name.

She was confident she would be vindicated by the video from the bar's surveillance system. State police are conducting a forensic analysis of the video.

"When the video comes back from Harrisburg it will prove that I'm innocent," said Figueroa.

1/14/2012

**Slashing victim's lawsuit identifies alleged assailant**

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The Prospect Street Cafe and its owner should have taken steps to protect a woman who was gruesomely slashed at the Nanticoke bar on New Year's Day, according to a lawsuit filed Friday in Luzerne County Court.

In the lawsuit, Jennifer Mieczkowski, 30, says the bar and its owner Paul Halliday were guilty of negligence that allowed another woman to slash Mieczkowski's face and neck with a box cutter.

Though a criminal investigation is still under way, the lawsuit also alleges 20-year-old Melanie Rosario Figueroa was the primary assailant.

Attempts to reach Figueroa via telephone Friday were unsuccessful.

Halliday said Friday that his employees did everything they could to help Mieczkowski and suggested video

surveillance from the bar shows she wasn't as innocent in the fight as has been reported.

"Our bouncer, our bartender did everything they could to help her," Halliday said. "The bartender even went after the (other) girl with a Taser."

Insufficient security?

Mieczkowski's claims against the bar include: a bouncer and other employees were not appropriately trained on security techniques; the bouncer was dressed in plain clothes and not easily identifiable; and Halliday failed to maintain a barred-patrons list.

The lawsuit says the bar employed Jerome "Mugga" Mills as a bouncer/security guard, and he was dressed in street clothes.

"It is believed and, therefore, averred that 'Mugga' Mills did not have any training as a security person," the lawsuit said. Halliday, though, says he has no idea who "Mugga" Mills is and that the bar employed a bouncer named Jamil Tucker who was not only wearing a shirt that said security, but he checked every patron's identification at the door and was easily recognizable.

The lawsuit also points to a conditional licensing agreement between the state Liquor Control Board and the bar that mandates the bar train employees, have a security guard on site on Friday and Saturday between 10 p.m. and 30 minutes after closing and maintain a barred-patrons list.

Halliday said the bar is still complying with that agreement.

"We did have some issues. We corrected them," he said. "That's why we are still in business today."

Avoidable incident?

Mieczkowski says in the lawsuit that Figueroa - the alleged assailant - was able to slash her because the bar failed to prevent Figueroa from entering in the first place.

Figueroa was underage and should have been on the barred-patrons list because of previous fights, the suit says.

Inside, bartenders served Figueroa alcohol, even when she was visibly intoxicated.

And, when the fight broke out, no one with the bar intervened.

"No one employed by defendant, Prospect Street Cafe, Inc., attempted to intervene, protect or assist plaintiff, Jennifer Mieczkowski," the lawsuit said.

According to online court records, Figueroa was charged with fighting and harassment on Sept. 13, 2010. She was found not guilty of fighting but guilty of harassment with physical contact and fined nearly \$300.

Halliday questioned whether he should have to check every patron's background.

"If she was underage, she must have had a fake ID," he said, "because my bouncer carded everyone at the door."

Investigators also seized surveillance footage from the bar for the criminal investigation, and Halliday said it shows that the bartender and bouncer jumped to help.

More importantly, he said, the video shows that Mieczkowski might have instigated the fight.

"The video system that the cops subpoenaed shows it pretty well," he said.

Mieczkowski has said before - and the lawsuit repeats - that she was coming to a friend's aid after the friend was knocked off of her bar stool.

Halliday, though, said the lawsuit shows where Mieczkowski's priorities lie.

"I don't know how she could claim this before the criminal investigation's done," Halliday said. "She's just more interested in money than justice."

The lawsuit asks for a judgment against Halliday and the business "in an amount in excess of the mandatory arbitration limits," costs, interest and attorneys fees and any other relief.

When reached Friday, Mieczkowski said she was told by her attorney, David J. Selingo, not to discuss the lawsuit.

Selingo did not return a telephone message left Friday afternoon.

Nanticoke Police Detective William Schultz said Friday that the investigation was ongoing but arrests were imminent.

Schultz would not comment about details of the investigation, including whether Figueroa was a suspect.

When asked whether the lawsuit's naming of an individual as the assailant would affect the investigation, Schultz said he wasn't concerned at this point and would see how it will play out.

"I'm surprised by this," he said, "but that can't affect our criminal investigation."

1/14/2012

**Slashing victim sues bar, owner**

**Jennifer Mieczkowski of Nanticoke was attacked inside the Prospect Street Cafe**

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A woman whose face was severely slashed inside a Nanticoke bar has filed a lawsuit against the tavern and its owner, alleging employees served her underage attacker and did nothing to stop the brutal attack.

Jennifer Mieczkowski of Nanticoke says Paul Halliday, owner of the Prospect Street Caf?, was negligent for allowing into the bar the person who Mieczkowski claims injured her, despite the fact the woman was under the legal drinking age.

Police have not identified the woman who allegedly slashed Mieczkowski, but the lawsuit claims she is 20-year-old Melanie Rosario Figueroa of Nanticoke.

The suit, filed Friday in Luzerne County Court by attorney David Selingo, claims Figueroa was intoxicated when she and a male, who is not identified, attacked Mieczkowski after she came to the aid of a friend who had been knocked off a bar stool.

Nanticoke police have been investigating the Jan. 1 assault but have not filed charges.

Selingo said Friday he does not understand why Figueroa has not been charged because Mieczkowski identified Figueroa from a photo lineup within 24 hours after the assault.

“Jennifer is very frustrated. She identified the girl a long time ago and there’s been no charges yet,” Selingo said.

Detective Capt. William Shultz said Friday police are continuing the investigation. A video taken from the bar’s surveillance system is now undergoing a forensic analysis at the state police lab in Harrisburg.

“When we are ready to make an appropriate arrest, we will make it. These things take time,” Shultz said.

Figueroa could not be reached for comment Friday. Michael Yelen, attorney for Halliday, did not immediately return a phone message left at his office Friday evening. A phone number at the bar was not operational when a reporter called Friday.

According to the suit, the Prospect Street Caf? had been the site of nine incidents involving disturbances at or immediately adjacent to the premises and also had received 16 citations over an unspecified period of time prior to the incident.

In order to renew his liquor license, Halliday entered an agreement with the Liquor Control Board that called for him to employ a security guard, provide training and to maintain a list of persons who were barred from the tavern.

The lawsuit alleges the tavern failed to keep a barred patrons list. It further alleges employees permitted Figueroa to enter the bar, despite knowing that she was under the legal drinking age of 21, and that she previously had been charged with disorderly conduct for fighting and harassment.

Court records filed with District Judge Donald Whittaker show a Melanie Figueroa was cited with three counts of disorderly conduct in September 2010. She was found not guilty of the charges at a hearing held on Dec. 7, 2010.

The suit says Mieczkowski was in the bar for only a short time before she was attacked by Figueroa and the unidentified male, each of whom slashed her about the face and head.

Mieczkowski’s friend, David Wells, tried to stop the assault. Rather than help him, a bouncer at the club dragged Wells outside the bar. A police report of the incident said Wells was beaten with a pool cue. The lawsuit does not identify who committed the alleged assault against Wells.

The suit seeks damages for two counts of negligence against Halliday and the tavern.

1/7/2012

### **Probe into slashing at tavern continues**

Times Leader Staff

Police said Friday they are continuing to investigate the vicious assault on a woman who suffered severe slash wounds to her face inside the Prospect Street Cafe on Jan. 1.

Jennifer Mieczkowski, 30, of Nanticoke, said she entered the tavern to buy beer to take home and started talking to friends around 2 a.m. She told police a woman lunged at her with a box cutter, slashing her face several times.

Ricky Wells, 31, of Mountain Top, suffered a broken jaw and facial injuries in the assault.

Mieczkowski said she entered the tavern with Wells, who was dragged outside and beaten with a pool stick.

Police said another man was injured in the assault.

Detective Capt. William Shultz said he has interviewed numerous witnesses who were inside the tavern. He said the investigation is ongoing.

1/4/2012

### **Nanticoke bar no stranger to Liquor Control Board**

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The embattled Prospect Street Cafe was already operating on borrowed time before Sunday's vicious slashing. After a series of liquor law violations and police responses, the state Liquor Control Board gave the bar's owners an ultimatum in November: clean up or be closed down, according to documents obtained by The Citizens' Voice on Tuesday.

A conditional license agreement between the board and the bar's owners reveals the board agreed to halt its efforts to revoke the bar's liquor license if the bar complied with a series of sanctions, from enhanced training to beefed up security.

It remained unclear Tuesday how the latest controversy will affect its license status, but police and prosecutors say they now plan swift action to investigate whether the bar should immediately be shuttered as a nuisance to the community. "Prospect Cafe has had its problems," said Sgt. Gary Severns, commanding officer of the state police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement. "But it's too early for me to say if they had any responsibility in this. I plan on contacting the district attorney's office to explore the possibility of a nuisance bar action. We'll see what the investigation brings and will go from there."

Early Sunday, Jenn Mieczkowski, 30, of Nanticoke, was severely wounded at the Prospect Street Cafe when she was slashed all over her face with a box cutter during a melee that erupted. She said she was an innocent victim, brutalized when a fight between two women spilled over to her. Her attacker, described as a female in her early 20s, remains at large, though police believe they know her identity.

The bar, at 23 Prospect St., has been cited 29 separate times for liquor law violations and fined \$11,400 since 2003, according to an online database operated by the state Liquor Control Board. Citations range from bad checks and loud music to permitting lewd entertainment and not providing records to investigators.

There also have been multiple police dispatches for fights and assaults, including on Dec. 20 when a man was beaten with a pool stick and the suspect threw a beer mug at a bartender.

Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis said her office is working with Nanticoke police and liquor control enforcement officials to investigate a possible nuisance action.

"When the investigation is complete, we will meet and determine if, in light of the current incident, what action can be taken, if any, within the letter of the law," Salavantis said.

| Friends of Mieczkowski have organized a rally and candlelight vigil for Friday at 5 p.m. at Patriot Square in Nanticoke to draw attention to the case and problems at the bar.

Meanwhile, police continue to investigate the crime itself. In addition to Mieczkowski's injuries, her friend was badly beaten and another man was slashed.

Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz spent Tuesday interviewing multiple witnesses who were in the crowded bar. He previously noted people in the bar cleaned up the bloody crime scene before police arrived and others, possibly an employee, gave misleading information about the severity of the incident that hindered the initial investigation.

"We're still investigating," Shultz said. "We have a lot of people to interview."

Mieczkowski said she went to the bar to get beer to go, and decided to stay for a drink after spotting a friend who was there celebrating New Year's.

While chatting, she said she drew attention to a fight going on near her between two women. She knew the woman being beaten, and summoned that woman's boyfriend to help. As she did so, the suspect attacked her with a box cutter, violently slicing her all across the face, she said.

Mieczkowski suffered slashes above her left eye, across her left cheek, on her left temple and on her nose. There's also a deep slice on the right side of her face that runs from her ear to jaw. Her head and face are now wrapped in bandages.

LCB records list the officers of Prospect Street Cafe as Paul Halliday, president, and Sandra Kaminski, manager.

"We're going through a lot right now. We feel bad for the girl," Kaminski said Tuesday, declining further comment when she answered the door at Halliday's Nanticoke home.

The LCB documents obtained by The Citizens' Voice on Tuesday indicate the board's Bureau of Licensing had been fighting the renewal of the bar's liquor license since August 17, 2010, due to multiple citations and police responses. "Prospect wishes to renew the license in question and proffers that many of the alleged problems with its operation will be alleviated if the conditions contained herein are imposed upon the license as well as the premises," the agreement, signed Nov. 28, says.

The owners agreed to revamp their policies, undergo intensive training, employ a security guard between the hours of 10 p.m. and closing on Fridays and Saturdays, and implement a banned patrons list, all within 90 days, according to the documents.

Failure to adhere to the agreement could lead to a revocation of the bar's liquor license, the sides agreed.

"I think the bar should be closed. I can't change what happened to my sister, but I don't want it to happen to anyone else," said Mieczkowski's sister, Ashlee Mieczkowski, 25, of Nanticoke. "I want them held responsible for what happened in their establishment."

1/3/2012

### **Nanticoke woman's face sliced in brutal bar brawl**

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Brutalized by a box cutter attack to the face, Jenn Mieczkowski says she was an innocent victim of a melee that erupted Sunday at a Nanticoke bar.

It happened in an instant. She didn't know her assailant. All she wanted to do was grab a 12-pack of beer and go home. Now, she'll have mental and physical scars for life.

Mieczkowski suffered severe slash wounds all across her face early Sunday when she was attacked during a bar fight just before 2 a.m. at the Prospect Street Cafe at 23 Prospect St. in Nanticoke.

"It was really scary," Mieczkowski, 30, of Nanticoke, recalled Monday, at home recovering from her wounds. "It happened so fast. I didn't initiate this at all."

Police said another man was slashed in the face during the brawl and one of Mieczkowski's friends was badly beaten. But it's clear Mieczkowski got the worst of it.

"There was blood everywhere. There was a trail of blood everywhere," she recalled. "I couldn't see because there was so much blood in my eyes."

Mieczkowski said she went to the bar to get beer to go, and decided to stay for a drink after spotting a friend who was there celebrating New Year's. While chatting, she said she drew attention to a fight going on near her between two women. She knew the woman being beaten, and summoned that woman's boyfriend to help. As she did so, the suspect attacked her with a box cutter, violently slicing her all across the face, she said.

"It was in an instant," said Mieczkowski, who was adamant she had no involvement in the fight and didn't previously know her attacker. "I didn't jump in the middle of it, not at all. As far as I am concerned, it was totally random."

Nanticoke police are working on several leads and are trying to positively identify the suspect - believed to be a woman who is about 21 years old, said Detective Capt. William Shultz.

"We're definitely going to be making an arrest," Shultz said. "We will find out who did this."

The female will be charged with aggravated assault and related crimes, Shultz said.

Shultz said several people may also be arrested for their involvement or for giving police misleading information upon arrival that hindered the investigation.

"Any crime scene was washed away. They cleaned up the blood before the guys got there," Shultz said. Mieczkowski's friend, Ricky Wells, 31, of Mountain Top, said he was beaten by a male suspect and suffered a broken jaw.

The Prospect Street Cafe has been cited 29 separate times and fined \$11,400 since 2003 by the Pennsylvania State Police, Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement, according to an online database operated by the state Liquor Control Board.

Mieczkowski suffered slashes above her left eye, across her left cheek, on her left temple and on her nose. There's also a deep slice on the right side of her face that runs from her ear to jaw. Her head and face are now wrapped in bandages. Mieczkowski operates Shear Image beauty salon on Broadway Street in Nanticoke. While she recovers, she can't work because of the risk of infection.

Doctors already performed hours of plastic surgeries on Mieczkowski and she said several more are planned "for my face to look remotely normal."

Mieczkowski teared up in front of family on Monday, knowing her face will likely be scarred forever.

"I know what I look like," Mieczkowski lamented. "I'll never look the same."