Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office in the News

July 1, 2009: WLFI TV

2nd of 3 suspects in VP robbery sentenced

STAFF REPORTS

A Gary teenager was sentenced Tuesday to 10 years in prison for his role in an armed robbery at a Lafayette convenience store a year ago.

Michael McCullough, 17, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 in April to robbery, a Class B felony.

He was one of three people charged after the April 21, 2008, holdup at the Marathon Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue and U.S. 52 North.

McCullough, Stephen Baker, 23, and Dante J. Dillinger, 22, were arrested that day after an attempted armed robbery at the Petro truck stop at U.S. 24 and Interstate 65 in Remington.

During the traffic stop, officers spotted a sawed-off shotgun in the rear hatch of their vehicle. Investigators found a .357 magnum revolver in a subsequent search that they suspect was used in the robbery.

McCullough also was ordered Tuesday to serve two years on probation after his release. His 10-year sentence is in addition to a six-year sentence for conspiracy to commit armed robbery in Jasper County.

Baker pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe County to robbery, a Class B felony, and was sentenced in April to 10 years in prison.

Dillinger is scheduled to stand trial Sept. 1 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

All three suspects are from Gary.

June 30, 2009: WLFI TV

VP robbery leads to 10 year sentence
Michael McCullough pleads to robbery

Updated: Tuesday, 30 Jun 2009, 4:31 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 30 Jun 2009, 3:54 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Gary teenager is sentenced to 10 years in prison, followed by two years on probation, for his role in an armed robbery in Lafayette.

Michael McCullough, 17, pleaded guilty to Robbery in Tippecanoe Superior Court.

McCullough and two other men held up the Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue in April 2008.

McCullough was 16 years old at the time, but was waived into adult court.

Two other Gary men were arrested in the case. All three are accused of robbing the VP in Lafayette, then trying to

hold up the Petro Trucking Center in Remington about 30 minutes later.

Jasper County Prosecutor Kathy O'Neall said the clerk told the men she had just changed the drawer and had no money. She said truck drivers chased the gunmen from the store. McCullough, Stephen Baker, 23, and Dante Dillinger, 22, were stopped on Interstate 65 shortly after the attempted robbery at the truck stop.

McCullough was sentenced to 6 years in prison for his guilty plea to Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery in Jasper County. Baker was ordered to serve 8 years in prison. Charges are still pending against Dillinger.

In the Tippecanoe County robbery, Stephen Baker was sentenced to 10 years in prison for the robbery. Dante Dillinger faces trial in September.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bank robbery suspect gets 10-year sentence

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Delphi woman accused of helping her ex-husband flee after an armed robbery at a Lafayette bank was sentenced today to 10 years in federal prison.

The woman - still only known as Jane Doe - caused several minor crashes as the Lafayette Police Department chased her Pontiac Aztec on Sagamore Parkway North the morning of March 1, 2008.

Just minutes earlier, a man had walked into Fifth Third Bank, 3620 Indiana 26 E., fired one round from a handgun into the ceiling and ordered everyone to the floor.

No one was injured. The man, later identified as Jorge Quintero, Jane Doe's ex-husband, got away with more than $20,000.

A federal jury found Jane Doe guilty of bank robbery by force or violence and unlawfully entering and remaining in the United States after a trial in U.S. District Court in late January.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington attended this morning's sentencing hearing in Hammond. He said Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall Stewart presented evidence showing that authorities have not yet been able to confirm Jane Doe's identity.

She gave Lafayette investigators the alias of Claudia Andrade-Martinez, Barbara Gonzales and Maria Carmen Alvarez.

"The name Claudia Andrade did come back as an actual person. But the photo was not the same as the defendant," Harrington said. "That means one of two things: either someone else is using her identity or she was lying."

Jane Doe and Quintero were arrested after the brief pursuit. She was driving.

Harrington said Immigration and Customs Enforcement also has a hold on Jane Doe, who is believed to be in the U.S. illegally. That means she likely will be deported upon release from prison.

Her Lafayette-based attorney, Tim Broden, could not be reached Monday for comment.

Quintero pleaded guilty in December to armed robbery, possession of a firearm by an illegal alien and unlawfully entering and remaining in the U.S.

He was sentenced last week to nearly 16 years in prison and three years supervised release.

June 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Cocaine dealer sentenced to 18 years
Dashiell Gilbert pleads to dealing charge

Updated: Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:29 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:29 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -
A Chicago man is sentenced to 18 years in prison for selling cocaine in the Lafayette area.

Dashiell Gilbert, 35, pleaded guilty to Dealing Cocaine. The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office said Gilbert sold 5 grams of cocaine to an informant in January 2008. According to a news release, "After fleeing police, Gilbert was found with more cocaine and several hundred dollars, some of which was in marked bills from the sale of the cocaine to the informant."

Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said Gilbert's previous criminal history includes several arrests for Possession of Marijuana, convictions for the Unlawful Use of a Weapon on two separate occasions, Operating While Intoxicated, Theft and Escape.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 18 years in prison for cocaine bust

STAFF REPORTS

A Chicago man accused of selling 5 grams of cocaine to a police informant was sentenced today to 18 years in prison.

Dashiell R. Gilbert, 35, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine, both Class B felonies.

Charges against Gilbert stemmed from an investigation in January 2008 in which Gilbert tried to flee from police after the cocaine sale.

He was caught with more cocaine and several hundred dollars in cash, some of which were marked bills used in the controlled buy by the informant.

June 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Lafayette man sentenced for meth
Justin Stetler handed 8 year term

Updated: Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:17 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 29 Jun 2009, 3:17 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -
A Lafayette man is sentenced to 8 years in prison, followed by 4 years on Community Corrections for selling methamphetamine in the Lafayette area. Justin Stetler, 23, pleaded guilty to Dealing Methamphetamine.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office said Stetler was arrested in January after selling meth to a confidential

informant. According to a news release from the the Prosecutor's office Stetler's prior criminal history includes convictions for Burglary, Possession of Marijuana, Residential Entry and Escape.

June 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 8 years for meth deal

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to eight years in prison for selling methamphetamine to an undercover police informant.

Justin P. Stetler, 23, pleaded guilty May 29 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to dealing methamphetamine, a Class B felony.

Charges were filed following an investigation and his arrest in January.

Stetler also was ordered to serve four years on Tippecanoe County community corrections after his release.

June 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Judge hands molester 15-year term

By SOPHIA VORAVONG/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 15 years in prison for having sexual contact on several occasions with a young boy in his care.

Nathan D. Hawkins, 29, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of child molesting, each a Class C felony.

The victim, 7 years old when Hawkins was arrested in December, told investigators that the sexual abuse began nearly three years earlier.

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Hawkins sobbed as he apologized to the boy, the boy's family, his own family, Tippecanoe County courts and sheriff's investigators.

"I have so many apologies to give. ... There are no excuses," Hawkins said, reading a prepared statement. "These events should have never taken place. It's certainly not who I was raised to be."

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office began investigating after the boy's mother -- an acquaintance of Hawkins -- found photos last year of a naked boy on Hawkins' cell phone and a naked girl on a computer he used.

She then asked her son if he had ever been inappropriately touched. According to court documents, the 7-year-old gave different scenarios in which he was touched by Hawkins or was asked to touch himself.

The boy's grandmother testified Friday that he continues to be troubled by what took place and is scared to use the bathroom or shower alone.

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify alleged victims of sexual abuse or their family members.

"A little child's life has been altered, and it will be that way for the rest of his life," she said, urging Judge Randy Williams to hand down the maximum punishment allowed.

Williams agreed, ordering that Hawkins also spend one year on supervised probation after his release. The combined 16 years was recommended by Tippecanoe County's probation department.

The judge said he was disturbed by what took place given Hawkins background. Hawkins formerly was a corrections officer in Montgomery County, a sheriff's deputy in Marion County and worked with at-risk youth, according to information presented during Friday's hearing.

"Rightfully or wrongfully, it's a concern that I have," Williams said. "This young boy, more likely than not, trusted you."

Hawkins worked at the Community and Family Resource Center in Lafayette at the time of his arrest. Those duties included supervising high school-age children who were referred there through the juvenile court system.

The victim was not a client at the CFRC.

Hawkins' attorney, Tom O'Brien, argued for some of his clients' sentence to be served on house arrest. He said Hawkins' pleaded guilty so that the victim would not be forced to endure a trial.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman, however, said offenders convicted of child molesting cannot serve any portion of their sentence through community corrections -- the program through which house arrest is monitored.

Hawkins will have to provide his address and other identifying information for life to Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry after his release.

He also will have to abide by residency restrictions that prohibit sex offenders against children from living within 1,000 feet of a school, public park or youth program center.

Hawkins told Williams he plans to appeal his sentence.

June 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier ~ Editorial

Gangs will only move on if confronted

Gangs, in their basic form, are nothing more than an organized group of criminals, and criminals generally prey upon opportunities and weaknesses.

To combat crime, a community generally must reduce the opportunities for criminals to be successful and present a united front against them.

Project Safe Neighborhood, a county-wide effort to confront crime, means that Tippecanoe County is ahead of many Indiana communities.

Thursday's presentation on gangs in Tippecanoe County by sheriff detective Rob Rush should be a reminder that the community needs to remain vigilant, but it should not be a call to panic.

Gangs take advantage of divided communities and infect apathetic neighborhoods -- and fearful neighbors -- like a virus that spreads to other areas. If neighbors stand up against crime, the criminals grow weaker.

Neighborhood associations and neighborhood crime watches are powerful defenses. Project Safe Neighborhood helps coordinate these groups and serves as a bridge between residents and officials.

Project Safe Neighborhood is designed to empower neighbors, remove indifference and teach landlords how to prevent would-be criminals from taking root in rental properties.

In essence, the project amounts to turning on the proverbial lights and watching the cockroaches scurry for cover.

If criminals or gangs are to be successful, a community must leave them alone.

If Greater Lafayette confronts them, criminals and gangs will move to another neighborhood that is more to their liking. Confront them often enough and in places throughout the community, and the criminals will abandon the area all together.

June 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen gets 6 years for having sex with girl, 13

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Thursday to six years in prison for having sexual contact with a 13-year-old girl on several occasions.

James W. Ratliff II, 18, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to a single count of child molesting as a Class B felony.

Ratliff originally was charged in juvenile court because he was 17 when the sexual contact began. He was waived in February to adult court.

The Lafayette Police Department began investigating in January after the girl told her mother that the two had sex on several instances between August and December 2008.

She turned 13 that August.

According to court documents, Ratliff told investigators that he did not realize it was illegal for a 17-year-old to have sexual contact with a 13-year-old.

Under his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, two additional counts of child molesting were dropped.

June 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged with seducing teen girl

Staff Reports

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man accused of having a sexual relationship with a teenager in his care, allegedly beginning when the girl was 14 years old.

She is now 19.

Eddy W. Ramey Sr., 42, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with three counts of sexual contact with a minor, a Class C felony; two counts of attempted child seduction, a Class D felony; and seven counts of child seduction, a Class D felony.

He was released Wednesday from the Tippecanoe County Jail after posting a $10,000 surety bond.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office began investigating in April after the girl's grandmother reported "ongoing sexual contact" between the teen and Ramey.

Ramey was in a position of trust over the girl for several years, Detective Rob Rush said Thursday.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the criminal charges, the girl told an investigator with the Department of Child Services that it started with "tickling and wrestling" when she was 14.

That allegedly progressed to fondling and other sexual activity. The charges allege the sexual misconduct continued through 2008.

Ramey, however, reportedly told investigators that the first incident began when the girl was 161/2 years old.

June 23, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty plea entered in 2002 murder
Extradited from Mexico, Pacheco faces up to 65 years in prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man faces between 45 and 65 years in prison for fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body on a rural Tippecanoe County road nearly seven years ago.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty Monday morning to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

He was outfitted with a protective vest for the hearing in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17 before Judge Don Daniel.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico -- where he was arrested 16 months ago on unrelated offenses -- after being on the lam for six years.

Through a Spanish-language interpreter, Pacheco admitted Monday to shooting Santa Rosa multiple times with a handgun. The two were inside a Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco.

When asked by his court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, whether he meant to kill Santa Rosa, Pacheco at first quietly replied, "No."

He later replied that was his intent.

Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

About three months prior to Santa Rosa's death, Pacheco reportedly aimed a shotgun at Huerta and fired a round into the air. No one was injured.

Pacheco was briefly highlighted on two episodes of "America's Most Wanted" in July 2004 and October 2007 as authorities searched for him.

Neither Huerta nor members of Santa Rosa's family attended Monday's hearing. A telephone listing for an Edmundo Huerta in Lafayette went unanswered Monday afternoon.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he recently spoke with Huerta, who said he had not spoken to Santa Rosa's family in several months.

Attempts by his office and sheriff's investigators to reach Santa Rosa's family also were not successful.

"He said he is going to do his best to try and reach them," Harrington said of Huerta, explaining that the family may have moved to Mexico.

Physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco included blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges.

The vehicle was discovered abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after Santa Rosa's body was found dumped on Lilly Road.

Pacheco is charged in a separate case filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness related to the June 2002 incident involving Huerta.

If Judge Daniel accepts Pacheco's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, those charges will be dropped.

Huerta agreed to those conditions, Harrington said.

Pacheco, a Mexican national, also faces deportation after he serves time. The terms of Pacheco's sentence will be left up to Daniel.

Harrington said Pacheco was given a protective vest as a precaution, though no known threats were made against him prior to Monday's hearing.

June 22, 2009: WLFI TV

Guilty plea in 2002 murder
Tereso Pacheco sentenced in July

Updated: Monday, 22 Jun 2009, 1:45 PM EDT
Published : Monday, 22 Jun 2009, 1:08 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A seven year old murder case ends in a guilty plea. Tereso Pacheco, 45, pleaded guilty to the murder of Juanita Santarrossa.

Pacheco admitted to killing Santarrossa, 44, his former girlfriend, in September 2002. She was found dead along Lilly Road. She suffered gunshot wounds. Court records said Pacheco was upset that Santarrosa had a new boyfriend and he had threatened to kill her three weeks prior to her death. The Affidavit said the murder charge was based on DNA evidence from the car Pacheco was using. It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat.

Police said Pacheco fled the area and was arrested in Mexico in February 2008. He was extradited back to the United States a year later.

Pacheco faces up to 65 years in prison when he is sentenced in Tippecanoe Circuit Court on July 17th. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Pacheco also faces deportation after he completes the sentence.

June 22, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Pacheco pleads guilty to murder

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man faces between 45 and 65 years in prison for fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body on a rural Tippecanoe County road.

Tereso Pacheco, 46, pleaded guilty this morning to murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

During his appearance at Tippecanoe Circuit Court, Pacheco wore a protective vest, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17 before Judge Don Daniel.

Pacheco was extradited in February from Mexico - where he was arrested a year ago on unrelated offenses - after being on the lam for six years.

Through a Spanish-language interpreter, Pacheco admitted in court today to shooting Santa Rosa multiple times with a handgun.

The two were inside a vehicle driven by Pacheco.

When asked by his court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, whether he intended to kill Santa Rosa, Pacheco at first quietly replied, "No."

Investigators alleged that Pacheco shot Santa Rosa because he was jealous of her new boyfriend, Edmundo Huerta.

Neither Huerta nor members of Santa Rosa's family attended the guilty plea hearing this morning. Harrington said he recently spoke to Huerta, who said he had not spoken to Santa Rosa's family in several months.

"He said he is going to do his best to try and reach them," Harrington said, explaining that the family may have moved to Mexico.

Physical evidence inside the Pontiac Bonneville driven by Pacheco included blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges.

The vehicle was found abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after the shooting.

Pacheco also is charged in a separate case filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness.

Those charges stem from an incident in June 2002 in which Pacheco is accused of aiming a shotgun at Huerta and firing a round into the air. If Judge Daniel accepts Pacheco's plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, those charges will be dropped.

Harrington said Huerta agreed to that condition of the plea agreement.

June 20, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Religious card salesman arrested for robbery

By Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of reportedly threatening a detective and police officers who were trying to interview and arrest him in a robbery investigation.

Eric D. Sims, 36, was charged Thursday with robbery resulting in bodily injury, a Class B felony; intimidation on a law enforcement officer, a Class D felony; attempted battery by bodily waste, a Class D felony; and misdemeanor counts of resisting law enforcement and criminal mischief.

He was being held Friday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $75,000 surety bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, Sims is accused of

stealing a personal check from and knocking down a woman who refused to purchase religious trading cards from him.

The woman told investigators that she was smoking outside her apartment last Sunday night when a man, later identified as Sims, approached her.

The responding officer to that incident recognized Sims as potential suspect based on the woman's description of a scar on his lower left leg and skin grafts on his left arm.

During an interview at the Lafayette Police Department the following day, Sims allegedly became combative and threatened to blow up the building.

While outside, as officers struggled to handcuff him, Sims reportedly banged his head on the hood of a patrol car, causing three to four dents.

Sims also is accused of spitting at Detective Cecil Johnson and, after being taken to St. Elizabeth Medical Center, lunging at and trying to bite a nurse.

He later apologized and told Johnson that he reacts badly when he takes medication and drinks alcohol.

Tippecanoe County's online court records -- as of Friday afternoon -- did not indicate which public defender has been appointed to represent Sims.

June 19, 2009: OUR TOWN

Prosecutor fights rising drug, gang problem

POSTED: Friday, June 19, 2009
By KEVIN HOWELL, OURTOWN.COM

LAFAYETTE -- Gangs and drugs, two interrelated issues in Tippecanoe County, are on the list of problem priorities for Prosecutor Pat Harrington to resolve.

The 51- year old, first term prosecutor has enlisted the help of law enforcement, community organizations, area schools, and residents to combat those as well as other problems.

“When I ran (for office) I thought the prosecutor needs to be interactive with people and the community,” said

Harrington in his fourth floor courthouse office.

To that end the Lafayette native, former defense attorney and former deputy prosecutor in Lake County, helped initiate programs involving the community.

WeTip, Project Safe Neighborhoods make impact

Starting with a Project Safe Neighborhood grant and hiring grant coordinator Kathy 'Kat' Redd, Harrington worked with landlords to help identify good tenants, to make their property safer, and to handle bad-tenant situations especially where criminal activity is involved.

Through those efforts, and with the ambition and drive of Redd, Harrington said, the WeTip Hotline was introduced.

"When Kat started working with landlords, she did focus groups with landlords, community leaders, people in the community and Neighborhood Watch programs. She discovered there was an opening in the system - people wanted to connect but didn't want to call police because they might be identified," Harrington explained. "They want to be involved but not to the extent there may be retaliation or to get involved in a legal matter."

In May 2008 WeTip, an anonymous venue for reporting suspicious activity, went online and in the six-month period from September 2008-April 2009, 508 reports of criminal activity were called in - a 112 percent increase over the first eight month period.

Drugs, Gangs on the rise

There were 122 reports of drugs sales and trafficking, 122 reports of child endangerment, 63 drug abuse, 32 weapons, and 26 fugitive tips.

With reported drug activity, gang activity had also risen.

"We have more drug crimes now. If you look at statistics most crime is drug – driven either because of drug addicts or drug dealers," said Harrington.

He cites a 48 percent increase in crack cocaine the last five years with 152 cases in 2008 compared to 38 four years ago.

"In my opinion, the reason we've had an influx of crack cocaine is it's the popular street drug, and we've become a good market for Chicago – for lack of a better expression, Lafayette has been discovered by drug dealers," Harrington said.

That's also where gang activity seems to originate.

"Gangs are on the increase. Ten years ago this community didn't have gangs, but with the change in demographics we've been discovered," He said.

Currently 28 gangs are reported in Tippecanoe County, with about 1,000 to 1,500 members.

"We don't have any home – grown gangs," Harrington said. "They are coming in and recruiting."

Harrington hasn't stopped with Project Safe Neighborhood and WeTip.

He has gone into schools passing out 55,000 flyers to K-12 children last year on gangs, drugs and other crimes.

Cops Online is another program where police network with officers across the country online and to learn about gang and drug activity.

Getting message to community important

A similar program – Teachers Against Gangs – is being promoted where teachers go online for information from other teachers – "like a FaceBook for teachers."

Project Safe Neighborhood includes monthly meetings with school corporation representatives, gang investigators, school resource officers, and juvenile probation to talk about trends in schools, recruitment by gangs, and graffiti.

"It's informal to get the message to the people," Harrington explained.

Getting the message out to the community is also why Harrington became a member of the local NAACP.

"I knew Sadie Harper-Scott, the director, when she was at the Hanna Center. When she wanted to reestablish the NAACP she said 'Pat it would be really nice to have you join,'" Harrington said.

"It's for people of all color, and if you go through their training you get a wonderful experience about how people of all colors have advanced the civil rights of everyone.

"It's good because I can be present, go to meetings and hear issues and give my opinion on the issues – it's a valuable addition to the community, and a way to reach people with a need in the community."

The community is key, Harrington, also a high school basketball referee, said.

"When I ran, I thought the prosecutor had to be a spokesman for the community, be proactive in community policing and getting the community involved with the issues of safety – it's not a police community, it's our community," he said.

"We'll be successful because the community has gotten behind us."

June 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former WL man pleads guilty in brutal child neglect case

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A former West Lafayette man faces between six and 20 years in prison for causing multiple broken bones that hospitalized his 3-month-old son a year ago.

Lucas W. VanNote, 21, pleaded guilty Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

The plea -- done without the benefit of a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said -- came a day before VanNote was to stand trial.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 5.

VanNote's son, Jayden VanNote, suffered injuries that included at least four fractures to his right forearm, three fractures to his thighs and fractures to both shin bones.

Charges against VanNote were filed after the boy's mother took him to the emergency room at St. Elizabeth Medical Center on April 15, 2008, for a red and swollen left leg.

Jayden was later transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis. According to court documents, doctors there told West Lafayette police investigators that some of his injuries were consistent with his arm and leg being jerked or yanked.

VanNote allegedly was angry because Jayden would not stop crying and kept spitting out his bottle.

Jayden has since been released from the hospital.

The family lived at the Country Villa Estates apartment complex on Yeager Road at the time. Tippecanoe County's online court records list VanNote's current address in Veedersburg.

VanNote, who was released from the Tippecanoe County Jail shortly after his arrest, was booked in again earlier this month because his bond was revoked.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said he recently was caught climbing out of Jayden's mother's apartment window at Country Villa.

The apartment complex had told him not to go on its property, Zeman said. VanNote is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 with resisting law enforcement and trespassing in that incident.

June 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL man pleads guilty to thefts

STAFF REPORTS

Lamarr R. Thornton, 22, of West Lafayette pleaded guilty Friday to two counts of burglary and four counts of theft in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Those charges stem from a string of thefts last fall that were linked to Thornton in December when police found dozens of stolen items in his apartment, including 40-inch and 46-inch televisions, jewelry, laptop computers, game systems, a bag of diet dog food and a bottle of bourbon.

Before Thornton's December arrest, he was apprehended in November after being spotted taking items from another apartment. He initially eluded police by running into a wooded area, where his clothes became wet. After shedding his clothes, he was caught wearing only his underwear.

He is scheduled to be sentenced July 28.

June 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 8 years in robberies

STAFF REPORTS

Kevin K. Williams, 19, of Lafayette was sentenced Thursday to eight years in prison for his role in the armed robberies of a gas station and restaurant in March 2008.

Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Williams to serve six of those years in the Department of Correction and suspended two years, to be served on probation, according to Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey.

He was one of four men involved in two holdups at Long John Silvers, 2839 Teal Road, and Citgo Gas Station, 999 S. Creasy Lane, on March 8, 2008.
According to McVey, Williams drove the other three men -- McConney George, Shamone Evans, and Nick Williams -- to Long John Silvers. The men used BB guns during the course of the robbery and allegedly struck four of the five employees while inside.

About 15 minutes later, Williams drove the group to the Citgo gas station, where two of the three people inside

were injured or struck and BB guns were used again.

Williams pleaded guilty this March and was sentenced on two counts of conspiracy to commit robbery, a Class C felony, and two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

Evans pleaded earlier and was sentenced in December to 30 years, 25 of them to be executed. Williams entered a guilty plea in May and remains to be sentenced.

George requested a jury trial, which has been scheduled for Aug. 25.

June 6, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 12 years for injury to son

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Monon man was sentenced Friday to 12 years in prison for inflicting a serious head injury that caused blood to pool around his infant son's brain.

Dustin M. Rodgers, 20, pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony. He also pleaded guilty to theft, a Class D felony, in an unrelated case originally filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Rodgers' son, Ethan Rodgers, was 8 weeks old when he was rushed to Home Hospital in early December for vomiting and unusual body movements. The boy was then transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

"It's a terrible thing, the number of lives ruined by the conduct you displayed," Judge Don Daniel told Rodgers after handing down the sentence.

Rodgers also was ordered to serve two years on community corrections and two years on probation, along with taking a parenting course.

According to court documents and information presented during court hearings, Ethan was born nine weeks early. He was hospitalized for nearly a month for the head injury caused when Rodgers admitted to getting frustrated by his son's crying. Ethan suffered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain, that appeared consistent with shaken baby syndrome.

Investigators with the sheriff's department believe the incident happened at the family's former residence in eastern Tippecanoe County sometime between Nov. 28 and Dec. 1 -- just days after the boy's mother, Aerial Rodgers, returned to work.

Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said Rodgers had insisted that Ethan was injured while Rodgers bounced his son on his knee.

Rodgers' attorney, Tom O'Brien, told the judge that it's unclear whether Ethan suffered any long-term damage and that the boy passed recent neurology tests.

Rodgers was given a combined 302 days credit for time already served and for good behavior.

June 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury convicts man of stabbing brother

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces a number of years in prison for slicing his brother's neck during an argument late September, missing an artery by a fraction of an inch.

After a two-day trial, David E. Wilson, 53, was found guilty Wednesday night of battery by means of a deadly weapon; battery resulting in serious bodily injury; and criminal recklessness, all Class C felonies.

He was found not guilty of the most serious offense, aggravated battery, a Class B felony.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury deliberated for about three hours before returning its verdicts. Judge Thomas Busch was presiding late Wednesday over a hearing on whether David Wilson should be deemed a habitual offender.

A date for his sentencing hearing was not immediately available.

David Wilson's brother, Steven Wilson Sr., 55, suffered a wound to the left side of his neck that measured 3 inches long and a half-inch wide. He needed stitches both inside and outside his neck at St. Elizabeth Medical Center. "He walked toward me and grabbed me," Steven Wilson testified Tuesday, using a piece of wood to demonstrate how the 12-inch kitchen knife was pulled along his throat. "He cut me deeply. ... I was trying to get out of there."

Steven Wilson also suffered fractures to his nose, jaw, ribs and an ankle. The knife wound missed an artery by less than 2 millimeters.

Officers with the Lafayette Police Department were called just after midnight Sept. 10 to Fowler Apartments, 407 Ferry St., where David Wilson resided.

In the lobby, they found Steven Wilson injured and David Wilson on the floor nearby. Jurors on Tuesday watched video surveillance from the apartment building's lobby, which began with Steven Wilson calling 911 for help. David Wilson is then seen coming off the elevator and knocking the phone out of his brother's hand. The two men were then seen wrestling on the floor.

Steven Wilson was unconscious when police arrived. He told investigators that he and a female friend were visiting his brother when David Wilson got angry and told them to leave.

David Wilson's attorney, Tom O'Connor, said that his client believed that his brother and friend had ransacked his bedroom, reportedly looking for money and pills. Investigators, however, could not substantiate that claim. The group had been drinking that morning. "He thought they were the police," O'Connor said, referring to Steven Wilson and the female friend. "It was a combination of alcohol and paranoia and prior violence."
David Wilson did not testify. O'Connor also argued that Steven Wilson's version of what had happened had inconsistencies.

Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe presented the case for the state. He argued that David Wilson may have been jealous of his older brother, noting that the defendant told officers that he wished Steven Wilson was dead.

June 3, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in apartment complex shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Two people fired rounds during a shooting last month that prompted authorities to evacuate some buildings at the Country View Estates apartment complex, court documents reveal.

The information was disclosed in a probable cause affidavit filed Tuesday with criminal charges against one of the suspected shooters, Justin Cook.

Cook, 24, of Chicago, has been sought since the May 12 incident. He is charged with carrying a handgun by a convicted felon, a Class C felony, and a warrant was issued Tuesday for his arrest.

"It's hard telling where exactly he is now," said Detective Bragg McDole of the Lafayette Police Department. "We think he travels back and forth between here and Chicago. ... He has access to various vehicles."
The other suspected shooter, Darrell Carter of Lafayette, was not arrested, McDole said. Investigators spoke with him on May 13, and Carter turned over a .38-caliber handgun police suspect was used.

Cook is accused of getting into an argument the afternoon of May 12 with Aaron Harrison, 26, for unknown reasons. Investigators believe he fired about five rounds, allegedly directed at Harrison and members of Harrison's family.

No one was injured.

Harrison and Carter are related. A home telephone number could not be found to reach Carter for comment. Dozens had gathered to watch behind yellow police tape as Lafayette's SWAT team searched several apartment buildings for Cook for nearly five hours.

Witnesses had said that Cook ran into an apartment on Keyes Court in Country View, although it was later determined he likely fled the apartment complex within minutes of the shootings, in which no injuries occurred.

According to the affidavit filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, Harrison referred to Cook as a former friend. Neighbors and witnesses told investigators that Harrison and Cook have fought on prior occasions.

McDole said investigators did not learn about the second shooter until two to three hours after the shooting, based on witness accounts. Police also found shell casings located a good distance from where Cook had been standing. Carter told them he was inside a nearby apartment when he heard gunshots. He admitted to going outside and firing three rounds at Cook, who reportedly had just fired two rounds.

The charge against Cook is based on prior convictions in Cook County, Ill., for possession of a controlled substance and distribution of a look-alike substance, both felonies.

"As soon as we locate Mr. Cook and obtain his side of the events that took place, we will review the charges again," Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

June 3, 2009: WLFI TV

Bookkeeper admits to library theft
Kimberly Helms pleads guilty

Updated: Wednesday, 03 Jun 2009, 5:03 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 03 Jun 2009, 11:40 AM EDT

Sue Scott

MONTICELLO, Ind (WLFI) - A former bookkeeper has pleaded guilty to stealing more than $25,000 from the Monticello-Union Township Library as well as $5,000 from a local soccer association.

38-year-old Kimberly Helms of Monticello pleaded guilty to forgery and theft Tuesday in White Superior Court.

Special Prosecutor Pat Harrington of Tippecanoe County said Helms admitted taking money for her own personal use when she worked at the library from March 2006 to January 2008.

The Affidavit of Probable Cause said an audit revealed 21 canceled checks written to Helms for sums totalling $14,490, as well as 4 canceled checks written by Helms to her own personal credit card accounts, and a check for

$810.28 to a individual for home repairs made to Helms' residence.

In addition, James Reed, an auditor with the Indiana State Board of Accounts, said there were multiple unauthorized purchases made with the Monticello-Union Township Library credit card. Court records said Helms admitted to the unauthorized personal use of the credit card.

Harrington said Helms also admitted to taking about $5,000 from the Twin Lakes Soccer Association. Helms was Treasurer of the organization in 2007 and 2008. Harrington says Helms has already repaid those funds.

Helms faces up to 11 years in prison when she is sentenced July 24 in White Superior Court.

May 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Suspect to enter plea in murder

Sophia Voravong/svoravong@jconline.com

A former Lafayette man accused of fatally shooting his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body along a Tippecanoe County road is expected to enter a guilty plea June 22.

Tereso Pacheco, 45, is charged with murder in the September 2002 death of Juanita Santa Rosa, also known as Sanjuana Santarrasosa, 46.

He was extradited in February from Mexico -- where he was arrested a year prior on unrelated offenses -- after being on the lam for six years.

Pacheco had been scheduled to stand trial June 16 in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. The guilty plea hearing was scheduled Friday morning by Pacheco's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, and Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Investigators alleged that Pacheco was jealous of Santa Rosa's new boyfriend.

Physical evidence, including blood splatter that matched Santa Rosa's DNA and .22-caliber cartridges, suggested that Santa Rosa may have been shot inside a Pontiac Bonneville that Pacheco was driving.

The vehicle was found abandoned in Iron County, Utah, three days after the shooting.

Pacheco also is charged in a separate case in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with felony counts of intimidation, pointing a firearm and criminal recklessness.

Those charges stem from an incident in June 2002 in which Pacheco is accused of aiming a shotgun at Santa Rosa's then-boyfriend and firing a round into the air. That case is scheduled for a June 23 jury trial.

May 29, 2009: WLFI TV

Murder suspect scheduled to plead
Tereso Pacheco accused in 2002 death

Updated: Friday, 29 May 2009, 3:06 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 29 May 2009, 12:49 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A man accused of killing his former girlfriend in Tippecanoe County seven years ago is

now scheduled to plead guilty to the crime.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Tereso Pacheco, 45, is not longer scheduled for trial next month. He is now expected to plead guilty on June 22nd.

Pacheco is charged with the September 2002 shooting of Juanita Santarrossa, 43. She was found dead along Lilly Road. Pacheco fled the area and was arrested in Mexico in March 2008. He was returned to the United States in February 2009.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor filed the charge in connection with the fatal shooting of Santarrossa. Court documents show the murder charge is based on DNA evidence from a green Pontiac Pacheco was using.
It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat. Lab tests show that a sample taken from the passenger seatbelt matched the victim's DNA profile. Court records also state that two 22-caliber cartridges were found in the car and that blood spatters are consistent with someone having been shot inside the vehicle.

May 20, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen arsonist gets 20 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Tuesday morning to 20 years in prison for several crimes, including setting fire to the home of a family with whom he once lived.

Michael J. Crider, 19, also must spend five years on probation and pay $364,540 in restitution, Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 ordered.

Crider pleaded guilty in April to arson, a Class B felony; burglary, a Class B felony; two counts of forgery, a Class C felony; fraud on a financial institution, a Class C felony; and four counts of auto theft, a Class D felony.
The charges were part of five separate, unrelated cases against him.

According to court documents, Crider was accused of taking items from and then setting fire to a house at 3918 Kensington Drive in June 2007, causing serious damage. The homeowners were on vacation at the time.
Crider, who used to live with the homeowners, was identified as a suspect in the arson after the Lafayette Police Department began investigating him for other crimes.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Crider told detectives he stole the items -- starting a fire to cover the burglary -- because he owed a gang money for his alleged crack cocaine addiction.
Following are the crimes to which Crider also pleaded:
☐ Posing as an employee at Payless Auto Sales, 3106 Sagamore Parkway S., and selling five vehicles as "junk" vehicles for $1,000 in March 2008.

☐ Depositing checks for several thousand dollars that he did not have from one checking account at a Lafayette bank into another in early 2008.

☐ Using paycheck stubs from his girlfriend's mother to make "check-by-phone" payments for his credit card bill in October and November 2007.

Through his attorney, John Sorenson, Crider told Busch that he does not plan to appeal his sentence -- though it would be allowed under his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office.

Several members of Crider's family attended Tuesday's sentencing hearing and asked if the teenager could hug his infant son goodbye.

"He's in the custody of the sheriff now," Busch said, "and I don't believe the sheriff's rules permit that."

Crider was given a combined 768 days credit for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

May 19, 2009: WLFI TV

Drug debt led teen to arson, robbery
Crider sentenced to 20 years

Updated: Tuesday, 19 May 2009, 4:28 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 19 May 2009, 4:28 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A teenager said he owed a lot of money to a gang for crack cocaine, which is why he stole items from a Lafayette house, then set the place on fire.

19-year-old Michael Crider pleaded guilty to charges in three separate cases including arson and burglary.

He was sentenced today to 20 years in prison.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington says Crider broke into a house on Kensington Drive in June 2007.

He took computers, a television and jewelry from the house, then started a fire to cover up the crime.
The homeowners were out of state on vacation.

The judge ordered Crider to pay more than $364,000 in restitution.

In the other cases, Crider stole cars from two dealerships.

Two of the cars were stolen from a Bob Rohrman dealership. They were test driven and not returned. They were left abandoned along the side of the road when they ran out of gas.

Crider also stole three cars from Payless Auto Sales and resold them. The prosecutor said he forged titles when he sold the vehicles.

May 15, 2009: WLFI TV

Rapist sentenced to 32 years in prison
Steven Chavez convicted of rape

Updated: Friday, 15 May 2009, 5:00 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 15 May 2009, 4:43 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man is sentenced to 32 years in prison for breaking into a woman's house and raping her.

Steven Chavez, 24, pleaded guilty to Rape and Burglary. In July 2008, Chavez attacked a women that he knew who lived near downtown Lafayette. Police said Chavez removed a window air conditioning unit to get inside the woman's house around 3:00 a.m. During the incident, Chavez took the woman's young child and tied the door shut to the child's room. When a 911 tape was played for the judge, the victim told police the attacker had threatened to kill her.

The sentence in the Rape and Burglary case includes 32 years in prison, followed by six years on probation. The first four years of that probationary period will be spent on Community Corrections. The judge added another thee and half years in prison to the sentence because Chavez was on probation for Intimidation at the time.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Chavez has prior convictions for Possession of Marijuana, Intimidation, and Resisting Law Enforcement. He said Chavez must register as a violent sexual offender and must follow lifetime residency restrictions.

May 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 32 years for rape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 32 years in prison for breaking into the home of a female acquaintance last summer and sexually assaulting her.

Steven R. Chavez, 24, also was ordered to serve three years and six months in prison for violating his probation in an unrelated intimidation conviction.

After his release, Chavez must spend four years on community corrections and two years on probation, Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 ordered.

The victim did not attend Friday's sentencing, though she wrote a letter to the court.
Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said the woman wanted Chavez to serve time behind bars in hopes that he would not assault anyone else.

Chavez was accused of breaking into the woman's residence on South Third Street on July 25. According to court documents, the woman was in her bedroom when she heard someone trying to open the locked door.

After yelling that she was going to call police, the suspect charged into the room and attacked her. He then shut the woman's 3-year-son in another bedroom by tying shoelaces to the doorknob and a nearby stair well.

The woman was forced into the bathroom, where she was raped.

Chavez was identified as a suspect because the woman recognized his voice and, when outside later, noticed a vehicle that matched Chavez's behind her home.

The two had known each other for years.

Chavez pleaded guilty in April to rape and burglary, both Class B felonies - sparing himself a trial for rape as a Class A felony, which carries a more severe sentencing range.

During Friday's hearing, Chavez said that his father - allegedly an alcoholic - is serving prison time in Texas. Chavez said he also struggles with alcohol abuse but is trying to raise three children.

Under his plea agreement, Chavez cannot appeal his convictions or file for post-conviction relief.

After his release, Chavez must register as a sexually violent predator, meaning he will have to provide law enforcement his address for the state's Sexual and Violent Offender Registry for life.

May 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dealer to serve 20-year term

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced Thursday to 20 years in prison for dealing cocaine and for being a habitual substance offender.

Deon R. Harris, 29, pleaded guilty to both offenses in December in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.
Harris was arrested on March 3, 2008, after a joint investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit and the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Harris, who originally is from Indianapolis, has prior convictions for battery, carrying a handgun without a license, possession of cocaine and possession of marijuana.

May 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

South side drug dealer gets 35 years

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced today to 35 years in prison for selling cocaine to a police informant out of his home on the city's south end.

Juan C. Gonzalez, 24, was found guilty in January of three counts of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; two counts of possession of cocaine as a Class A felony; and one count of possession of cocaine as a Class B felony.

The jury trial was held over two days in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Charges against Gonzalez stemmed from a lengthy investigation by the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force and the Indiana State Police drug enforcement section, which was focused on people believed to be major players in narcotics sales in the community.

Gonzalez was arrested in April 2008.

He was accused of selling more than nine grams of cocaine to a police informant on three separate occasions and of selling a 9 mm handgun and a .38-caliber revolver.

Kristen McVey, Tippecanoe County chief deputy prosecutor, said Gonzalez has been unemployed since 2004 and supported himself by selling drugs and guns.

She said all three drug sales of which Gonzalez was convicted occurred between 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Gonzalez's former Ottawa Drive home is located near Miami Elementary School, Kennedy Park and the Lyn Treece Boys and Girls Club.

However, even without proximity to a school or park, dealing more than three grams of cocaine is a Class A felony under Indiana law.

May 14, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 charged in connection to attempted robberies

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Suspects in at least two home invasions and attempted robberies at gunpoint told investigators that the weapons they used were toy firearms, court documents reveal.

Six men were charged Wednesday with numerous felonies in connection with a residential armed robbery April 10 in rural West Lafayette and a home invasion April 18 in Lafayette that ended with shots fired.

Capt. Bruce Biggs, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's detectives division, said Wednesday that more arrests are possible. He said the suspects are believed to be involved with other robberies and home invasions that were not reported to authorities.

"We learned this through the investigation of the two crimes we did know about," Biggs said. "But unfortunately, those victims have not come forward."

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, the men are accused of conspiring to rob people whom they knew to be involved in drug trade in the Lafayette area.

A victim in the April 10 residential robbery, which was investigated by the sheriff's department, was arrested April 7 on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance and dealing marijuana.

In that incident, four armed men forced their way inside a home on Indiana 26 West, bound a man and a woman with duct tape and took off with electronics and the woman's purse, according to the affidavit.

On April 18, four armed men forced their way into an apartment in the 1700 block of Vinton Street and tied up three men inside with electrical cords. After realizing they were at the wrong address, they forced a female tenant at gunpoint to a nearby apartment. They fled when a tenant there fired rounds from a gun.

The following men have been identified as suspects:
☐ Charles Erik Moritz, 21, of West Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery by means of a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

☐ Dayna M. Alvarez, 24, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery by means of a deadly weapon, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

Charges initially filed last week against Alvarez, who was found in Monroe County, were dismissed.

☐ Randall C. Belmont Jr., 26, of West Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery by means of a deadly weapon, both Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

☐ Tradell S. Marzette, 23, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies.

☐ Cecil Trey Johnson III, 23, of Clarks Hill is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery by means of a deadly weapon, both Class B felonies. He also is charged with burglary, a Class C felony, and two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

The burglary charge stems from a break-in last week at Parkside Pharmacy in Lafayette. Information he provided, along with information from acquaintances of the other suspects, helped lead to the arrests.

☐ Sylvario T. Wilson, 22, of Lafayette is charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, four counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted robbery, all Class B felonies. He also is charged with theft, a Class D felony.

Everyone but Moritz -- who posted bond last week -- remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail late Wednesday on a $250,000 surety bond. An arrest warrant was issued Wednesday for Moritz's re-arrest.
According to court documents, suspects told police they used toy guns, such as BB guns, in the holdups.

May 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dad pleads guilty in shaken baby case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Monon man faces between six and 20 years in prison for inflicting a serious head injury that caused blood to pool around his infant son's brain.

Dustin M. Rodgers, 20, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

Ethan Rodgers was 8 weeks old when he was rushed to Home Hospital in early December for vomiting and unusual body movements. Rodgers admitted that he got frustrated with the boy and tried to discipline him.
"My wife went to work. I had care of Ethan," Rodgers said in response to questions asked by his attorney, Tom O'Brien. " ... He was crying for about 45 minutes straight."

Sentencing is scheduled for June 5 before Judge Don Daniel. Rodgers did not explain how he disciplined the boy. Investigators with the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department believe the incident happened sometime between Nov. 28 and Dec. 1 -- just days after the boy's mother, Aerial Rodgers, returned to work -- at the family's former residence in eastern Tippecanoe County.

According to court documents, Ethan was born nine weeks early and hospitalized for nearly a month. At the time that he was injured, it was about a week after his full-term due date.

Ethan suffered a subdural hematoma, or bleeding around the brain, that appeared consistent with shaken baby syndrome. He also had retinal hemorrhages.

Rodgers has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since Jan. 9.

He also pleaded guilty Friday to an unrelated theft filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5. He admitted to stealing from an area Wal-Mart last September.

If the judge accepts Rodgers' plea with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, sentencing on the theft offense, a Class D felony punishable by six months to three years in prison, would run concurrently with his sentence for neglect of a dependent.

Ethan, who was taken to Riley Hospital for Children after initial treatment at Home Hospital, has since been released from medical care.

May 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Enhanced charge filed in child's death

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man suspected of causing the death of his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter has now also been charged with being a habitual offender.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed the charge Friday against Thomas A. Dexter, 31. If convicted, the habitual offender status would enhance his sentence by a number of years in prison.

Dexter is charged with neglect of a dependent, a Class A felony, in connection with the death of Kimberly "Kimmy" Snow. The Lafayette toddler died Tuesday at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis. She had been hospitalized in critical condition with severe brain trauma for five days.

The prosecutor's office filed the habitual offender allegation based on two prior felony convictions Dexter received in Tippecanoe County courts. He was sentenced to four years in May 2000 for theft and to four years for residential entry and theft in April 2005.

May 8, 2009: WLFI TV

5 arrested in 2 similar robbery cases

Updated: Friday, 08 May 2009, 2:12 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 08 May 2009, 10:45 AM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A joint investigation into two armed robbery cases has yielded five arrests.

For the past several weeks, detectives from the Lafayette Police Department, the West Lafayette Police Department, and Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department have been working together on a joint investigation of two similar armed robberies.

The first robbery under investigation took place on April 10 on the 2000 block of State Road 26 West. Four men forced their way inside a home, asked where money was located. They tied up the occupants, a man and a woman. After the robbers left, the occupants were able to untie themselves and contact police.

The second robbery took place on April 18 on the 1700 block of Vinton Street in Lafayette. Four armed men forced their way into an apartment and tied up three men inside the residence. The robbers questioned their captives, asking where drugs were located, but then realized they had entered the wrong apartment.

The robbers forced a woman in the apartment to try to contact the occupants of a second residence, where robbers believed drugs were present. When the woman attempted to make contact, a shot was fired from the second residence and the suspects fled the area.

Sylvario Wilson was arrested in connection with both robberies, on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery. Dayna Alvarez and Charles Moritz were also arrested in connection with both robberies on a charge of Armed Robbery. Randall Belmont, Jr. was arrested in connection with the April 10 robbery, on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery. Tradell Marzette was arrested in connection with the April 18 robbery on a charge of Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery.

The police investigation into these cases continues.

May 7, 2009: WSBT South Bend

U.S. attorney addresses case of North Carolina boy held in South Bend

HAMMOND, Ind. — The U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Indiana issued a press release Thursday in response to media reports about the arrest of 16-year-old Ashton Lundeby of North Carolina, who is being held at the Juvenile Justice Center in South Bend.

According to the release by U.S. attorney David Capp, his office "previously announced that a juvenile was arrested pursuant to a federal warrant. The arrest stems from a false bomb threat directed to Purdue University on Feb. 15 and similar threats directed to other schools.

"The FBI, the Purdue University Police Department and the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office conducted an extensive investigation into this matter, resulting in that arrest. Over recent days, several media sources have reported information that is incorrect.

"Accordingly, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana wishes to further announce that a juvenile information has been filed and is pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. That charge alleges a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(e), which prohibits sending false information about an attempt to kill, injure or intimidate any individual or to unlawfully to damage any building through an instrument of interstate commerce. This charge is unrelated to the Patriot Act.

"The juvenile has appeared in court on three occasions, once in North Carolina for an initial hearing and a detention hearing, and twice in Indiana for a continued initial hearing and a status hearing. At each hearing, the juvenile was represented by counsel. The government has filed a motion with the Court seeking to transfer the juvenile to adult status for prosecution pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 5032; that motion is pending before the Court and is scheduled for a hearing during the month of May.

“The juvenile is presently housed in a juvenile facility in the Northern District of Indiana where he does not have contact with adult offenders. His mother has been apprised of each court appearance and has attended the hearing in North Carolina; she did not appear at either of the hearings in Indiana. The juvenile facility where he is housed permits family visits.

“Because the statutes governing juvenile proceedings limit public disclosure of information related to a juvenile case, the United States Attorney declines any further comment.”

The media attention on the case so far has centered around Lundeby's mother protesting the arrest of her 16-year-old son from his home in Oxford, N.C. WRAL-TV reported last week that the 10th-grade home-schooler is being held on a criminal complaint that he made a bomb threat from his home on the night of Feb. 15. The article has since been circulating on the Internet as a civil-rights infringement under Patriot Act constraints.

The family was at a church function that night, his mother, Annette Lundeby, told the TV station.

Reporter John Paul will have more on this story on WSBT News at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.

May 6, 2009: WLFI TV

Battered 3-year-old died in hospital
Doctor: injuries "could not have been accidental"

Updated: Wednesday, 06 May 2009, 7:45 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 06 May 2009, 11:30 AM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A 3-year-old girl has died after a five-day stay in Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

The child, Kimberly Snow, was admitted to the hospital after an incident last Thursday, when police received a call to help an unresponsive 3-year-old child.

Kimberly was first taken to Home Hospital but was transferred to Riley shortly thereafter, where she remained in critical condition for several days. She died at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

She had been left in the care of her mother's boyfriend 31-year-old, Thomas Dexter.

Dexter was arrested last week on suspicion of Neglect of a Dependent Causing Serious Bodily Injury and Aggravated Battery. On Wednesday the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor charged Dexter with Neglect of a Dependent, a Class A felony.

The court affidavit said the child was examined by doctors at Riley Hospital, who found serious head trauma. These documents also show that police spoke with Dr. Hibbard, who is known to be a leading expert in the State of Indiana in child abuse examinations. Dr. Hibbard examined Kimberly and confirmed the head trauma, as well as a compression spinal fracture, and retinal hemorrhages in both eyes.

The affadavit states that Dr. Hibbard said that Kimberly's injuries were caused by inflicted trauma and could not have been accidental.

The child's mother, Amber Haper, had left home around 9:15 a.m. to attend an appointment. The affadavit said that Haper told police Kimberly was getting dressed as she left for her appointment and was healthy and uninjured at the time.

Court records say Dexter first told police he left the girl in the bathtub and when he returned to check on her, she was unresponsive.

When two Lafayette Police detectives spoke with Dexter again, asking him to explain Kimberly's extensive injuries, court documents show that his story changed.

Though Dexter initially said he found her unresponsive in the bathtub, he then told detectives that Kimberly wet her pants, so he took her into the bathtub to change her clothes and clean her up, the affadavit said. According to the affadavit, Dexter said he was playfully tossing her when he accidentally dropped her into the bathtub, causing her to strike her back on the edge of the tub and hit her head on the bottom of the tub. The documents further say that Dexter said he picked her up and was carrying her when he accidentally struck her head on the door frame or short wall as he left the bathroom to go downstairs.

The Marion County Coroner's Office is conducting an autopsy and have told police that the child's death was hemhorrage due to blunt force trauma to the head, but the final autopsy report will not be available for several weeks. There was initial delay in filing charges while the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor awaited information from the autopsy.

Dexter posted bail and is no longer in the Tippecanoe County jail.

May 6, 2009: Indianapolis Star

Officials: 3-year-old's death no accident

By Sophia Voravong / Lafayette Journal-Courier
Posted: May 6, 2009

A Lafayette man suspected of causing head injuries that killed his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter would get angry when the girl peed her pants, an older sibling reportedly told investigators.

Thomas A. Dexter, 31, was charged Wednesday with neglect of a dependent causing death, a Class A felony, in connection with the death of Kimberly Snow.

Kimberly was admitted to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis a week ago today. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said she died at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Investigators are waiting on results of Kimberly's autopsy, which was completed Wednesday morning at Indiana University's School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Harrington said.

The preliminary cause of her death is hemorrhage due to blunt force trauma to the head.

The Lafayette Police Department was called about 10 a.m. last Thursday to 3032 Phipps Court in the Country View Estates apartment complex where Dexter lived with his girlfriend and her three children.

Dexter is not the father of the kids, Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said. Kimberly's siblings are ages 9 months and 6.

He was the only adult and Kimberly was the only child home at the time. Her mother, Amber Haper, and the baby were at a Women, Infants and Children appointment.

Dexter reportedly told investigators that he put Kimberly in the bathtub and, after being gone for a few minutes, found her face submerged in the water. But the first responding police officer noted that the girl's neck and right arm were dry to the touch.

Kimberly initially was taken to Home Hospital and transferred by ambulance to Riley that morning.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with the criminal charge, Dexter told police Kimberly's injuries occurred when he threw her in the air like a "circus act." He allegedly said the girl's head accidentally struck the bottom of the tub.

Dexter also reportedly said the girl's head struck either the door frame or a wall as he carried her out of the bathroom.

But doctors at Riley said Dexter's story did not match Kimberly's injuries, which "were caused by inflicted trauma and could not be accidental."

A CT scan showed that she suffered a subdural hematoma, or a type of traumatic brain injury that causes blood to pool around the brain. She also had retinal hemorrhages in both eyes and a compression spinal fracture.

Kimberly's 6-year-old sister was interviewed Friday by a child forensic investigator, during which time she allegedly said that Dexter would discipline them by spanking, smacking them in the mouth or making them stand in the corner but only when their mom was at work. She said "Kimmy" also got in trouble with Dexter and their mother when she peed her pants.

The girl's grandfather told investigators that he previously was concerned that Kimberly seems to get hurt while in Dexter's care, according to the affidavit signed by Detective Bragg McDole. But he said the girl never said anything about Dexter or appeared scared of him.

Harrington said the investigation is ongoing.

Detectives with the Lafayette Police Department declined Wednesday to comment on the case, instead referring questions to Harrington.

In a request for a warrant to search the Phipps Court residence, investigators sought clothing worn by both Kimberly and Dexter. They also wanted to examine the bathroom and fixtures.

Dexter is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on both a 15-day probation detention and a $100,000 surety bond. He originally was arrested Friday but was released from jail after quickly posting a $25,000 surety bond.

Zeman, who handles crimes involving children for the prosecutor's office, said Wednesday that she does not anticipate additional charges being filed against Dexter.

Results of Kimberly's autopsy will likely take several weeks.

May 5, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bond increased for dad accused of battery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Bond was significantly increased Monday for a Lafayette man accused of causing serious facial injuries suffered by his son, 7.

Taurean J. Debose, 24, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of battery causing bodily injury after the boy's grandparents took him to the Home Hospital emergency room.

Hospital staff contacted the Lafayette Police Department about 12:30 a.m. Capt. Bruce Biggs, commander of the investigations division, said the boy's left eye was nearly swollen shut.

He also had extensive bruising and swelling on his left cheek. Biggs said the boy was removed by the Department of Child Services and placed in foster care.

Debose's bond was raised from $500 cash to $50,000 surety. The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office has until Thursday afternoon to file formal charges.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6, the 7-year-old told investigators that he was smacked, punched in the face and whooped with a belt by Debose a couple of days before the emergency room visit.

Debose apparently admitted to being upset with the boy, but he said the facial injuries occurred when he went to nudge his son's shoulder and the boy ducked down. Debose also allegedly admitted to keeping his son out of school on Thursday and Friday because he was worried about how the injury looked.

The boy's grandparents took him to the emergency room after their daughter -- the boy's mom -- dropped him off at their home.

Debose remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail late Monday.

May 1, 2009: WLFI TV

Community can help stop gangs
WeTip Hotline is invaluable resource

Updated: Friday, 01 May 2009, 8:55 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 01 May 2009, 4:56 PM EDT

- Laura Kirtley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Police and school administrators say step one for any community is to stop gang influence among kids. Parents are part of the solution. It is a matter of educating them about gangs so they know what to look out for. Some students said most parents are not aware of just how influential gangs are in the schools.

"Some parents don't even know what's going on. Most kids don't even talk about it because they are too afraid to talk about it at home, because they don't want anything to happen to them," Lafayette Jeff High School student Austin Jackson said.

Lafayette Police Officer Mike McIver works in the Lafayette school system. He said he has seen a child as young as six-years-old sporting gang paraphernalia.

"There has also not been a whole of education in the home about gangs. What they create and what can happen when you get involved in the gang. So when they get into it, they don't really know what they are getting in to until it's too late," McIver said.

Some students who have found themselves caught up in gang activity have a warning for parents and students.

"I joined it because I had problems. Now I know it's not good. It's not fun. It gets you into a lot of trouble. From my experience I'd tell them no--don't join gangs it's not good," a Lafayette Jeff High School student said.

Outside of the schools and in our neighborhoods, police say graffiti is a sign residents should not ignore. While gang graffiti is creeping up around the community, people are just as quickly working to clean it up. Something Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said is important to show gangs they are not wanted in the community.

"When they know that local citizens are going to be protective of their neighborhoods they'll move on to another city or location where they can blend in and do their illegal activity," Harrington said.

Lafayette residents, who have seen their neighborhoods spoiled by gang activity and drug deals, urge others to be aware and work with law enforcement to save their neighborhoods.

"It's everybody's problem. Everyone in the city of Lafayette it can happen in your neighborhood too," Lafayette resident, Tracey Smith said.

Parents, teachers, and community members can do more to help. A website set up by the Tippecanoe County Prosecutors office shows which gangs are working in our area. It can be a good resource for parents. They can find out what to look out for--gang identifiers like signs and colors. For more information Click here

Additionally, the Prosecutor said the anonymous WeTip Hotline is an invaluable resource. The number is 1-800-78-CRIME. Harrington said since WeTip started in May 2008, they have received 700 tips.

April 30, 2009: WLFI TV

Gang influence seen throughout county
Spike in drug arrests tied to gangs

Updated: Thursday, 30 Apr 2009, 5:52 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 30 Apr 2009, 5:14 PM EDT

- Laura Kirtley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Drug arrests in Tippecanoe County have skyrocketed, something police directly link to gangs in the area. Local police estimate there may be more than a thousand gang members living in Tippecanoe County. One place police are working to cut down on gang activity is in local schools. For kids who crave inclusion, schools are the perfect breeding ground for gang recruitment.

"I think it's just to feel like part of a group, and just to feel welcomed somewhere. That's mostly it. Some people just walk around the hallways by themselves. Just hang out, like a little clique," a Lafayette Jefferson student said.
"For someone who is lost, to some extent, not having the bonding of family and friends then that becomes a very powerful recruiting tool," said Lafayette Jeff High School Assistant Principal Roger Francis.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said it is easy to see gang influence in the community by just looking at the number of drug arrests.

"Gangs are probably the most successful capitalistic organization in the world. They know how to make money, they don't pay taxes on it and its cash," Harrington said.

In 2008, there were 172 crack-cocaine arrests in Tippecanoe County, compared to 30 arrests in 2004.

"It's no secret that in the last three or four years we've seen an increase in convenience store robberies at the same time we've seen an increase in drug distribution by gangs," Harrington said.

Lafayette Police created the Street Crimes Unit in 2007 to counteract increased gang activity. Officers patrol areas where there are high numbers of drug arrests and gang activity.

"Out here originally, this was a good spot for a lot of people to come there were a lot of gang members out here that, they knew to come here and that's what caused a lot of the problems," Lafayette Police Sergeant Tim Payne said.

Back in the schools, students said gang members are easy to spot.
"In the bathroom there is graffiti sometimes there is so much graffiti that they have to close down the bathrooms to clean up the walls," Lafayette Jeff High School senior said.

Tomorrow we will take a look at how police, school administrators and community members are fighting back against gangs.

April 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Armed robbery nets 10 years in prison

STAFF REPORTS
A Gary man was sentenced today to 10 years in prison for holding up a Lafayette convenience store a year ago. Stephen Baker, 23, was one of three people charged in connection to the April 21, 2007, armed robbery at the

Marathon Village Pantry on Schuyler Avenue and U.S. 52 North.

He pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to robbery, a Class B felony.
Baker, Dante J. Dillinger, 22, and Michael L. McCollough, 17, were arrested that day after the Petro truck stop at U.S. 24 and Interstate 65 in Remington was held up. Patrol units spotted a vehicle that matched one at the scene at the robbery.

During the traffic stop, officers spotted a sawed-off shotgun in the rear hatch of the vehicle. They later searched the vehicle and a found a .357 magnum revolver that investigators suspect was used in the robbery.

According to Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Baker said they committed the robbery to get money to buy drugs. All three suspects are from Gary.

McCollough pleaded guilty last week to robbery, a Class B felony. He's scheduled to be sentenced June 5 before Judge Randy Williams.

Dillinger is scheduled to stand trial June 2 before a Superior 1 jury.

April 30, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-CFRC worker enters molestation plea

STAFF REPORTS

A West Lafayette man faces between four and 16 years in prison for having sexual contact on several occasions with a 7-year-old boy.

Nathan D. Hawkins, 29, pleaded guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of child molesting, each a Class C felony.

He's scheduled to be sentenced June 8 by Judge Randy Williams.

Hawkins was arrested in December after the boy's mother, an acquaintance of Hawkins, found photos of suspected child pornography on Hawkins' cell phone and computer. She then asked her son if he had ever been touched inappropriately.

According to court documents, the 7-year-old told a child forensic investigator that the alleged sexual abuse began nearly three years earlier.

He gave different scenarios in which he allegedly was touched sexually by the suspect or was asked to touch himself.

Hawkins formerly worked with youth at the Community and Family Resource Center, supervising high school-age children who were referred there through the juvenile court system.

The victim was not a client at the CFRC.

Hawkins had been charged with five counts of child molesting, all counts a Class C felony. If the judge accepts his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, three counts will be dropped.

April 25, 2009: WLFI TV

VP robber gets 16-year term

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 16 years in prison for holding up a convenience store last summer and for being a habitual offender.

Lucio Hernandez Hinojosa, 27, was accused of pointing a handgun at two Village Pantry employees during an Aug. 6 robbery at the store on South Fourth Street.

No one was injured. The former Gary resident fled with $138 and a carton of cigarettes.

Hinojosa was found guilty of robbery, a Class B felony; theft, a Class D felony; and criminal confinement, a Class C felony, after a bench trial in February before Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.
Williams later that month deemed Hinojosa a habitual offender.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said Hinojosa used the stolen money to buy drinks after the robbery at a West Lafayette bar.

Hinojosa pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 last November to charges of receiving stolen property, a Class D felony; and false informing, a Class B misdemeanor.

He also was convicted of residential entry in Tippecanoe County in 2001.

Hinojosa was identified as a suspect in the August robbery after a call was made to WeTip, an anonymous reporting hot line.

April 24, 2009: WLFI TV

VP Robbery nets 16 year sentence
Viewers help police find Lucio Hinojosa

Updated: Friday, 24 Apr 2009, 5:51 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 24 Apr 2009, 5:51 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A man who robbed a Village Pantry store last summer is going to prison for 16 years. Tippecanoe Superior I Judge Randy Williams found Lucio Hinojosa, 27, of Gary, guilty of Robbery while Armed with a Deadly Weapon, Criminal Confinement, theft and being a Habitual Offender during a bench trial in February. He sentenced Hinojosa to 16 years in prison, followed by 6 years on probation.

Hinojosa was identified after photographs from Village Pantry surveillance cameras were released to the media. **Several tips from the public were called in through the WeTip hotline.**

In a news release, Tippecanoe County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said during the robbery Hinojosa took about $138 in cash from the V.P. on South 4th Street. "After the robbery the defendant spent the money buying drinks at the Neon-Cactus."

McVey said Hinojosa has prior convictions for Theft, Auto Theft and Residential Entry.

April 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Drunk driver sentenced to 12 years
June 2008 car crash killed two

Updated: Friday, 17 Apr 2009, 6:22 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 17 Apr 2009, 6:22 PM EDT

- Kristin Crowley

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - 20-year-old Chris Weaver plead guilty to driving while drunk. He crashed his car into a guard rail on Wabash Avenue in June 2008, killing two passengers Demetrius Fikes and Ben Shaw.

Weaver faced a maximum sentence of 16 years, and some family members of the victims said that's what he deserved.

"Nothing will bring my son back but it's time for Chris Weaver to take responsibility," said Linda Shaw.
Linda Shaw's son Ben was one of the victims in the crash. She fought back tears throughout the sentencing as deputy prosecutor Kristen McVey showed photographs of the crash.

"Losing my son Ben was one of the hardest things I've ever had to live through," said Shaw.
Weaver was traveling down Wabash road when he crashed into a rail, killing Shaw and Fikes. Nearly a year later friends and family of the victims continue to honor their memory by leaving flowers at the crash site.
"My youngest son has to go through that every single day. And I don't know what kind of damage that's doing to him," said Shaw.

Fikes' Aunt Ruby Vaughn says the judge's decision brings her closure.

"It's all tragic. To me, I'm just glad it's a closer. You know, it's all over with," said Vaughn.
But she said other family members do not share her feelings.

"They ain't happy. They ain't happy, but I am," said Vaughn. "I hate to see him go because you know, he's young. They still babies."

Of the 12 year sentence, Weaver will spend six years in prison, followed by two years in community corrections, then four years probation. Tippecanoe Superior Two Judge Tom Busch also ordered Weaver's license be suspended for five years upon his release from the Department of Corrections. Defense attorney Matt Sandy is appealing the sentence. Family members of Weaver would not comment.

April 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Driver accused of killing Harrison teen to plead guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man accused of driving impaired the night his sport utility vehicle crashed into another car, killing a Harrison High School student, is scheduled to enter a guilty plea June 26.

An attorney for Joseph L. Welch, 30, scheduled the date this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. He had been scheduled to go to trial May 5 before Judge Thomas Busch.

Welch has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest on Nov. 24 in connection to the death of 16-year-old Katherine Ann Baker.

He is charged with six felonies, including operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death, a Class C felony; OWI with a blood-alcohol concentration greater than 0.15 percent causing death, a Class B felony; and reckless homicide, a Class C felony.

Baker was turning left onto U.S. 52 from Morehouse Road shortly before midnight Nov. 23 when her 2000 Buick LeSabre was struck on its driver's side by Welch's 2008 Dodge Nitro.

The Harrison junior, who went by Kate, was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy showed she died from blunt force trauma.

A blood test taken at St. Elizabeth Medical Center showed that Welch had a blood-alcohol content of 0.21 percent after the crash. That's more than double Indiana's legal limit of 0.08 percent to drive.

Welch also was cited for two counts of disregarding a traffic control device. According to court documents filed with the charges, investigators have video from the nearby Marathon-Village Pantry reportedly showing Welch's vehicle going through two red traffic lights.

April 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman pleads to child neglect

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman faces between two and eight years in prison for injuries that a friend's toddler-age son suffered while in her care.

Karla M. Culley, 26, pleaded guilty Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony because the boy suffered bodily injury.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 25.

Culley did not admit to injuring 20-month-old boy, whom she was baby-sitting for 11 days last August. But at the questioning of her attorney, Michael Trueblood, she acknowledged the seriousness of the injuries and said she never took the boy to get medical treatment.

According to court documents, the boy suffered an occipital skull fracture -- a break in the bone at the base of the skull -- and bruises on his face and ears, consistent with direct blows to the face.
Doctors at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis also found injuries to his genitals that appeared to have been caused by the area being pinched.

Culley told investigators that on other instances where she watched the boy, he always came to her with bruises. She explained that other injuries were caused when the boy fell down concrete steps and tripped over a toy, hitting his face on the linoleum.

Detective Bragg McDole of the Lafayette Police Department, who investigated the neglect accusations, said Tuesday that no other adults have been arrested or charged in connection to the boy's injuries.

Culley is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail, where she is serving a 120-day sentence for violating probation in an unrelated marijuana possession case out of Tippecanoe Superior Court 4.

Her attorney requested that Culley be admitted to Home with Hope after her release in mid-May. Trueblood also asked for the later sentencing date to see how Culley fares at the rehabilitation agency. "Substance abuse is an element here," he told Judge Thomas Busch.

If Busch accepts Culley's plea with the prosecutor's office, an additional neglect charge and two counts of battery on a child, all Class D felonies, would be dropped.

April 15, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man pleads guilty to rape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces between six and 40 years in prison for breaking into the home of a female acquaintance last summer and sexually assaulting her.

Steven R. Chavez II, 24, pleaded guilty this morning in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to rape and burglary, both Class B felonies. Sentencing is scheduled for May 15.

Chavez has been held on a $100,000 surety bond in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest on July 25. That morning, a Lafayette woman reported that she was raped by someone who broke into her South Third Street residence.

She was treated for injuries at St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

According to court documents, Chavez and the victim have known each other for several years. The woman told investigators that she was in her bedroom when she heard someone trying to open the locked door.

When she yelled that she was going to call police, the suspect charged into the room and attacked her - squeezing the woman's neck so hard that she nearly passed out.

The man then shut the woman's 3-year-old son in the bedroom by tying shoelaces to the door knob and a nearby stair rail. He is then accused of forcing the woman into the bathroom, where the suspected rape took place.

Chavez was identified as a suspect because the woman recognized his voice and, when outside, noticed a green, four-door sport utility vehicle - a description that matches Chavez's vehicle - parked behind her home.

Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department said today that the attack is believed to have been an isolated incident.

Under the terms of his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, Chavez cannot appeal his convictions or file for post-conviction relief, Deputy Prosecutor Laura Zeman said.

The terms of his sentence will be left up to Judge Randy Williams, who can either merge or stack the offenses to which Chavez pleaded. A Class B felony is punishable by between six and 20 years in prison.

Chavez also admitted Wednesday to violating his probation for unrelated intimidation and thefts cases.

April 11, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man who led police on chase convicted

STAFF REPORTS

An Illinois man faces prison time after being found guilty of fleeing from police and injuring two officers during pursuit a year ago that began at the Country View Estates apartment complex.

Ronald Lamar Wright, 23, was found guilty of resisting law enforcement with a vehicle, operating a vehicle while under the influence of marijuana, reckless driving and other misdemeanor offenses after a trial Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6.

Jurors deliberated for just 20 minutes before returning the verdicts, according to Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey.

The Lafayette Police Department was called to Country View Estates on the city's south end on Jan. 28, 2008, for a domestic violence complaint. The caller identified Wright as the suspect.

Officers attempted to pull over Wright, who at first stopped his vehicle but then fled. The pursuit reach speeds of more than 60 mph going north on Ninth Street and onto Union Street.

Wright's vehicle crashed into a tree off Courtland Avenue. He was arrested shortly thereafter in the yard of a

nearby residence, where he fought with police, McVey said. Two officers suffered minor injuries.

A sentencing date has not yet been set.

April 9, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Fight over TV leads to 6 years in prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Gary man will serve six years in prison and must take anger management courses for stabbing his former roommate during a dispute last summer over a flat-screen television.

Alvin R. McBride, 29, formerly of West Lafayette, also must spend a year on supervised probation after his release, Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch ordered this morning.
McBride pleaded guilty March 3 - the day his jury trial was scheduled to begin - to battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony, admitting that he stabbed Mani Johnson three times. He had been charged with attempted murder.

Johnson, 31, suffered wounds to his abdomen and left arm. Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Ian O'Keefe said Johnson bled so heavily that he required a blood transfusion after the "Blitzkrieg-style" attack.

"One stab wound went straight through his arm," O'Keefe said. "For it to go through his muscle and back out ... required a lot of force. Mani Johnson felt the defendant was trying to kill him."

McBride, however, testified that it was not his intent. The former friends had argued in prior months because Johnson was not working while living with McBride and owed him money.

"He used to be a close friend," McBride said. "I'm sorry. I wish he was here so I could apologize to him and his family."

The stabbing took place June 29 in the parking lot of The Lodge Apartments, 2101 Cumberland Ave. in West Lafayette, where both Johnson and McBride lived. An injured Johnson drove himself to the nearby Wal-Mart Supercenter for help.

According to evidence presented in court today, Johnson had filed a theft report June 23 with the West Lafayette Police Department, saying someone stole his 40-inch television and a game system from his apartment.

Johnson went to McBride's apartment on June 29 and, while peering through the patio doors, saw what he believed his television inside. He admitted to going through the unlocked patio doors and taking it.

Detective Sgt. Cindy Marion said investigators later determined the flat-screen belonged to Johnson.

McBride's attorney, Scott King, told Busch that Johnson's then roommate, Lamont Lane, gave McBride the television as payment for money Johnson owed.

The prosecutor's office, however, has not been able to contact Lane. It's believed that he faked his own death, O'Keefe said.

Busch also ordered that McBride pay about $4,300 in restitution to cover Johnson's medical costs.

"After listening to two hours of testimony this morning, there seems to be a disturbing trend toward self-help," the judge said, referring also to a prior sentencing in his courtroom for a drive-by shooting.

"I don't know why that is. Maybe it is just coincidental."

April 9, 2009: **WLFI TV**

Prison ordered in stabbing
Alvin McBride ordered to serve six years

Updated: Thursday, 09 Apr 2009, 4:45 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Apr 2009, 4:45 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A stabbing has resulted in a six year prison sentence for Alvin McBride.

The 29 year old Gary man pleaded guilty to battery with a deadly weapon.

McBride stabbed Mani Johnson outside Lodge apartments in West Lafayette in June 2008.
Court documents show McBride stabbed Johnson because he took a TV from McBride's apartment. Johnson claimed McBride stole the TV from him.

Johnson suffered stab wounds to the arm and abdomen and sought at a nearby Walmart.
Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington said Johnson supported of the plea agreement. McBride had originally been charged with Attempted Murder.

Once McBride serves his six year prison sentence, he must serve one year on probation.

April 8, 2009: **Lafayette Journal and Courier**

Teen's brazenness helps seal 30-year robbery sentence

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in prison for his role in an armed robbery a year ago that injured two Domino's Pizza employees.

McConney J. George, 18, was found guilty of 11 felonies -- multiple counts of robbery, criminal confinement and theft -- after a February jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

In handing down Tuesday's ruling, Judge Thomas Busch noted the teenager's lack of remorse. Three investigators with the Lafayette Police Department testified that they feared George would commit crimes of violence again.
"After I take statements, I like to ask the suspects what they learned from the interview, from the crime," Detective Lt. Tom Davidson said. "Very nonchalantly and without any remorse, (George) said, 'I left too many witnesses.'
"I was shocked by his answer."

George was one of two teenagers who stormed into Domino's on Creasy Lane the night of March 2, 2008. He was armed with a BB gun that appeared to be a handgun, according to testimony presented during trial.

A male employee was struck on the top of his head with the gun, causing a large cut that bled immediately. A female employee was punched in the face.

The second suspect, Shamone L. Evans, 18, pleaded guilty to two counts of armed robbery and was sentenced in December to 25 years in prison.

George's mother, Janice Eloi of Baltimore, urged Busch to give her son a sentence in line with Evans. She testified that they moved to Lafayette just two to three months before the robbery, explaining that George was not familiar with the area.

"McConney thinks if he walks away, he is going to look weak," Eloi said. " ... He was not the ringleader. They made him out to be the ringleader. He didn't know Lafayette. He didn't know those places."

Both George and Evans also are believed to have been involved in a series of business robberies on March 8 in Lafayette. Those cases are pending.

Five other co-defendants -- all accused of minor roles, including accepting money taken in the robbery -- entered pleas with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office. They received lighter sentences.

George was represented during trial by attorney Mike Troemel, who also volunteered to represent the teenager on appeal.

During Tuesday's sentencing hearing, deputy prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich presented a recently discovered letter that George mailed from the Tippecanoe County Jail in April 2008. Sent to a female acquaintance, the letter described how to conceal marijuana in a pouch between two sheets of paper.

It also instructed the friend to put a co-defendant's name and address as the return address.
"This was an attempt to frame a co-defendant ... the 'snitch,' " Goodrich said.

April 7, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Teen gets 30 years for Domino's holdup

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager was sentenced this afternoon to 30 years in prison for holding up a Domino's Pizza a year ago and injuring two employees.

McConney J. George, 18, was found guilty of 11 felonies, including multiple counts of robbery and criminal confinement, after a jury trial in February in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

He was one of two teenagers who donned dark masks - believed to be T-shirts wrapped around their heads - and walked into Domino's on Creasy Lane the night of March 2, 2008.

George was armed with a BB gun that appeared to be a handgun, according to testimony presented during the trial. A male employee was struck on the top of his head with the butt of the gun, causing a large cut that bled immediately.

Investigators who interviewed George prior to his arrest testified today that they were troubled by statements George made.

"Very nonchalantly and without any remorse, he said, 'I left too many witnesses,' " Lt. Tom Davidson of the Lafayette Police Department testified. "I was shocked by his answer."

The second teenager, Shamone L. Evans, 18, pleaded guilty to two counts of armed robbery and was sentenced in December to 25 years in prison.

April 4, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets 10 years for 3 knife hold-ups

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette woman was sentenced Friday to 10 years in prison for holding up two restaurants and a convenience

store over three days a year ago.

Amy A. Jaime, 28, pleaded guilty in November in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to four counts of robbery, a Class B felony, and three counts of theft, a Class D felony.

It was done without the benefit of a plea agreement.

Jaime was arrested after Lafayette police received tips identifying her as a suspect in robberies at Domino's Pizza, 35 Beck Lane, on Feb. 25; Domino's Pizza, 1221 S. Creasy Lane, on Feb. 26; and Village Pantry, 3630 Greenbush St., on Feb. 27.

The robber in all three holdups was described as a short white woman in her late teens to late twenties. In each, a knife was displayed.

Detectives watching outside her apartment on Feb. 28 noted that a white coat worn by Jaime that day matched one worn by the Village Pantry robbery suspect.

Kristen McVey, Tippecanoe County's chief deputy prosecutor, said Jaime told investigators she robbed to support a crack cocaine addiction.

Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch also ordered Friday that Jaime serve two years on community corrections and two years on probation. She also must pay $786 in restitution.

April 3, 2009: WLFI TV

Former club president sentenced
Timothy Smith placed on work release

Updated: Friday, 03 Apr 2009, 6:55 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 03 Apr 2009, 4:12 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - Former booster club president Timothy R. Smith, 42, plead guilty to forgery, and has been sentenced to one year of work release for taking thousands of dollars from the organization.
Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Smith couldn't remember exactly what he did with nearly $22,000 that he took from the East Tipp Athletic Booster club during a six month period in 2007.
"He told the judge that he was going through a divorce at the time and was paying for family items," said Harrington.

At the time he was charged, Steve Kohne from the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department said that Smith used an ATM card, wrote checks, and cashed CDs.

Tippecanoe Superior I Judge Randy Williams also ordered Smith to serve five years probation and pay back the money he had taken from the the East Tipp Booster Club.

The booster club describes itself on its website as "a parent-run orgnanization that develops funds to support East Tipp Middle School student activities. Funds are used to purchase sports and extracurricular equipment, uniforms, and sponsor extracurricular club activites. East Tipp Booster Club members help run the concession stands at East Tipp football, basketball, and volleyball events. In addition, a major fundraising activity is working at a concession stand at all of the Purdue University football home games."

April 1, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Coke dealer gets 16 years

-- Curt Slyder/cslyder@jconline.com

An illegal alien living in Lafayette will spend 16 years in prison for selling cocaine to an undercover officer. Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams sentenced Luis E. Trejo, 38, on Monday after Trejo had earlier pleaded guilty to a Class A felony count of conspiring to deal cocaine.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Trejo sold cocaine to an undercover officer in a southside Lafayette apartment complex in 2007.

Trejo was in a vehicle that was stopped by police after the sale. Police found 28.6 grams of cocaine inside, Harrington said.

"That's a very large amount," Harrington said, estimating the cocaine's street value at $3,000 to $4,500.
Upon his release from prison, Trejo, who is in the country illegally, will be subject to deportation, Harrington said.

March 31, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

VP robber gets 8 years

-- Curt Slyder/cslyder@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Monday for attempting to rob a Lafayette Village Pantry with a sawed-off shotgun in April 2008.

Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch sentenced Robert P. Niles, 28, to eight years in prison to be followed by one year in community corrections and three years of supervised probation.

Niles pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony, and dealing in a sawed-off shotgun, a Class D felony.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Niles walked into the Village Pantry at 1008 S. Fourth St., on April 21, 2008, and pointed a sawed-off shotgun at the clerk, demanding money.

After the clerk didn't respond to at least two demands for money, Niles fled, Harrington said.
He was arrested at his Lafayette home a few days later. A sawed-off shotgun was found under his pillow, Harrington said.

March 29, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Concern about heroin on rise
Last year, 11 cases -- 9 so far this year

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

From what Detective Jon Eager of the West Lafayette Police Department knows now about heroin, it's no surprise how quickly abuse of the drug spread in his childhood hometown.

At one point, his Indiana high school's entire softball team tested positive for the highly addictive opiate, said Eager, drug recognition expert for the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

"Once you get a handful of people to try it, you've now got five new customers who need to have it," he said.

"Heroin creates a physiological addiction. Your body has to have it. Once it starts in a community, you're going to continue to see it."

Officials say that makes the drug's recent presence in Greater Lafayette all the more troubling.
As of March 27, nine people have been arrested in Tippecanoe County on suspicion of heroin dealing or heroin possession. That's compared to 11 heroin-related drug offenses for all of 2008, according to Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

"This is a reason for concern because the drug has not been in the area for a decade or more," he said. "There are some officers who have never dealt with heroin before.

"It's one more terrible drug here that we have to try and stem the distribution of."

Sgt. Tim Payne, commander of the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, said heroin is typically sold in "stamp bags" that contain about a tenth of a gram -- making it difficult for law enforcement to detect.
Yet even in small doses, people can easily overdose because of its potency, he said.

Processed from morphine, a substance extracted from the seed pod of certain types of poppy plants, heroin can be sold as anything from a white powder to a black, sticky substance known on the streets as black tar heroin. Injected, snorted or smoked, it gives users a rush within seconds.

Eager, a member of the drug task force since 2007, said officers first began hearing about heroin in Tippecanoe County last summer. A few months later, they began to see the drug sold and abused here.
Most of it appears to be coming from Chicago and Indianapolis, he said.

"These people, when they take heroin, actually get physically sick," Eager said. "They have sweats and goose bumps. They throw up. That's why they continue to use it -- they have to have it to not be sick anymore."
Both Eager and Lafayette police Lt. Pat Flannelly, commander of the drug task force, say another concern is heroin that's been mixed with fentanyl, a synthetic painkiller.

Fentanyl can magnify the effects of heroin, creating the equivalent of a double dose of the drug. Eager said that variation has not yet been seen in Tippecanoe County.

In the meantime, law enforcement is working quickly to learn more about the opiate. Harrington and West Lafayette police Chief Jason Dombkowski met this past winter with the U.S. attorney's office in northern Indiana about heroin's increased presence.

Dombkowski said officers from Tippecanoe County recently attended a training session in Michigan City about the drug and its effects.
"We got a lot of good information on what to look for," he said. "It's certainly not something we want to see take a stronghold in our community."

March 27, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 16 years for dealing coke

STAFF REPORTS

Andrew Boyd, 23, of Lafayette was sentenced Thursday to serve 16 years for selling crack cocaine to Drug Task Force officers in February and March 2007 at Country View Estates in southern Lafayette.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Boyd was sentenced by Judge Randy Williams in Superior Court 1 to serve 12 years on charges of conspiracy to deal, a Class B felony, and four years for forgery, a class C felony.

Boyd, who has prior convictions in another county for possession of a controlled substance, was ordered to serve 12

years in the department of corrections, one year community corrections and three years of probation.

March 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man found guilty of cocaine dealing

A Chicago man faces a number of years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday of dealing cocaine by a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury.

Brandon Mason, 23, was arrested in December 2007 after Lafayette police were called to investigate a domestic battery on Holloway Drive, south of downtown Lafayette.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said police found about 27 grams of cocaine and $1,000 cash on Mason as well as scales, syringes and cocaine residue inside the apartment.

He was found guilty of dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine, both Class A felonies, and two other drug offenses. The sentence for a Class A felony is from 20 to 50 years. He is scheduled to be sentenced April 23 by Judge Randy Williams.

March 26, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Growing presence, impact of gangs cited in Greater Lafayette

By Meranda Watling • mwatling@journalandcourier.com

Dru Anthrop said as a Central Catholic Jr.-Sr. High School student, he feels somewhat sheltered from gang activity and its influence in this community.

He said his awareness was raised after hearing Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington discuss the trends and related growing drug problems in Greater Lafayette. Harrington spoke to Central Catholic students and community members on Wednesday.

"I was kind of completely ignorant of gang activity because here, we're protected," Anthrop said. "I don't know anyone involved in gangs. This made me aware."

Harrington said teens like the Central Catholic senior and his schoolmates need to be educated about the signs of gang activity and how to react. That age group is more in tune with popular music videos and emerging technologies that gangs sometimes use.

"We are addressing the situation," Harrington said. "But you have to be aware. Because if you aren't aware and come across a gang and disrespect them, you could be in trouble."

Among the troubling local trends Harrington cited in his presentation was the known presence of at least 23 gangs in this county. Mostly, they have trickled down from the Chicago area.

He said while gang violence hasn't been a significant problem here, the drug trade is flourishing. More than 40 Class A felony drug arrests have been made this year, Harrington said. And more than half of those are believed to be gang-related.

Also, more heroin arrests were made in the first three months of 2009 than any year prior in Tippecanoe County.

Harrington said a drive-by shooting on Club Lane in December is believed to be gang-related, and he cited the ongoing presence of graffiti around the county -- including a gang "tag" in a courthouse restroom.

He showed the students some of the symbols or tattoos different gangs use, such as specific numbers or colors identified with particular groups. And he encouraged them to notify police via the WeTip hot line at (800) 78-CRIME or (800) 782-7463.

Central Catholic senior Heather Christopher said after the presentation that "some of the statistics, especially the local ones, were shocking."

She also was glad to be aware of the problem and also what to look for or avoid.

"It's important to know where you are and who's around you at all times," she said. "And be able to recognize the signs and to do something."

March 25, 2008: WLFI TV

Jury convicts drug dealer
Cocaine was coming from Chicago

Updated: Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 6:01 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 5:51 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A jury convicts a Chicago man of selling cocaine in the Lafayette area.

Brandon Mason, 23, was found guilty of Dealing Cocaine, Possession of Cocaine, Maintaining a Common Nuisance, and Possession of Paraphernalia. Mason was the subject of a trial Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court I.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington said Lafayette Police responded to a report of a domestic battery in December 2007 on Holloway Drive. "Police spotted the defendant leaving the scene," said Harrington. "Police found 21 grams of crack, digital scales and $1,000 on him. Inside the apartment, they found more scales, cocaine residue, marijuana, and a pipe."

Harrington said Mason would drive to Chicago every week or two to bring back cocaine to sell in the Lafayette area.

Mason faces a possible 50 year prison term when he's sentenced April 23rd. Harrington says Mason has no prior convictions.

March 25, 2008: WLFI TV

Prosecutor educates parents on gangs
Parents learn gang symbols

Updated: Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 11:45 PM EDT
Published : Wednesday, 25 Mar 2009, 11:45 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Parents gathered in the cafeteria at Central Catholic High School see what they might miss when out in public.

"I was interested to hear about gang activity in Lafayette," said parent Lou Fenoglio.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington broke down the different gang symbols and tattoos.

"I didn't realize there were so many different gangs associated with the Lafayette area," said Fenoglio.
Fenoglio will take what he's learned about the 23 gangs in Tippecanoe County home so he can educate his three children about what to watch out for.

"Just to be aware, not to be scared, not to be afraid, but to be aware and openly talk about it," Fenoglio said.
Prosecutor Harrington said he's leaving the courtroom to take on the role of teacher so parents can be part of the solution to the gang problem.

"So we can be safe and be smart and so they know what law enforcement is doing about the issue," explained Harrington.

Harrington hopes the presentation will also encourage parents to get involved to get gangs out of the area. Parents should know they are liable up to 5,000 dollars if their child does any damage in association with a gang. Also, most gang crimes are prosecuted in adult, not juvenile court meaning convictions will show up on a permanent criminal record.

March 21, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man stabbed brother; gets four years

Sophia Voravong; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday afternoon to four years in prison for stabbing his brother in the back after a fight that began over money.

Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 also ordered that William L. Craig, 55, spend four years on supervised probation after his release.

He also must pay $18,016 in restitution for his brother's medical expenses.

Craig pleaded guilty in January to aggravated assault, a Class B felony, admitting that he stabbed Jeffrey L. Craig on Aug. 22 at the brother's residence on Cor Dale Court.

Jeffrey Craig, was stabbed more than once, with the most serious being a wound to the right side of his back that punctured a lung. He was hospitalized for a day at St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Jeffrey Craig told Tippecanoe County probation officers that it was not the first time his brother brandished a weapon at a family member.

According to court documents, William Craig told investigators that he had been staying with his brother for the past few months.

They had been drinking and playing games when they started fighting over William Craig's lack of employment and his not helping with finances.

March 19, 2009: WLFI TV

WL sex offender sentenced
38 year sentence for child molestation

Updated: Thursday, 19 Mar 2009, 10:31 AM EDT
Published: Wednesday, 18 Mar 2009, 10:04 PM EDT

- Jenna Emenhiser
- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man is sentenced to 38 years in prison for molesting two young boys.

Matthew Paul Richardson, 33, pleaded guilty to two counts of child molesting.

Tippecanoe County Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said the children were abused during a three year period

starting in 2005.

The boys were ages six and ten.

McVey said when Richardson was interviewed by police, he admitted the molestation, but justified it by saying it was "consensual" and that "no one got hurt" because there was "no blood or bruising."

McVey said the judge found aggravating factors in the case, including the defendant had attempted to hire someone to kill the deputy prosecutor and two witnesses.

March 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Confinement leads to 10-year term

A Lafayette man was sentenced Tuesday to 10 years in prison for forcing his girlfriend out of her vehicle and into his pickup, then driving her to a home they shared.

The incident took place in June 2008 near Happy Hollow and River roads.

Douglas H. Wilson, 34, pleaded guilty in November in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to criminal confinement, a Class C felony; domestic battery, a Class D felony; and possession of marijuana with a prior conviction, a Class D felony.

He also was found to be a habitual offender.

Wilson was accused of crashing into his girlfriend's vehicle before forcing her into his truck. The woman's three children and another adult were left behind.

March 17, 2009: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Realistic 'toy' guns growing concern for police officers

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

When two masked men stormed into a Lafayette restaurant a year ago waving a black handgun, employees had no way of telling that the brandished weapon was a toy.

The BB gun was made of a hard, heavy plastic. Silver-colored metal detailing contributed to its realistic appearance, Detective Herb Robinson of the Lafayette Police Department testified during a trial last month of one of the suspects.

It was just one example of a growing concern for law enforcement officials, who say toy guns that closely resemble real weapons could end in tragedy.

"At quick glance, in the heat of the moment, there's no way to tell what's real and what's not," Robinson said this week. "You have to assume in those situations, such as robbery, that a weapon being pointed at or directed toward you may very well cause harm."

Since 2000, the Lafayette Police Department has investigated at least 33 incidents involving "fake or fictitious" weapons, including airsoft guns that shoot plastic BBs at relatively low velocities.

Robinson said the actual number of incidents could be higher because of instances where a crime is initially entered as involving a firearm. He shared samples of airsoft guns confiscated over the years and kept in LPD's property room.

"These two here are very similar in size, color, markings, handles," Robinson said. "The biggest difference is their

weight, but even then there's not a lot of difference."

Federal law requires that toy guns or imitations have an orange tip to indicate they're not real, but the tips can be removed or easily disguised. One of the airsoft guns confiscated by Lafayette police had the orange tip painted black.

And Tippecanoe County Sheriff Tracy Brown said the orange tip may not be noticeable in poor lighting.
"As police officers, we have to look at the totality of the situation. If it's an 8 year old carrying it, it's probably not a real weapon," he said. "But if it's a teenager, that is not as easy to determine. It's a matter of time and place."

Brown agreed with Robinson that some manufacturers make realistic airsoft and BB guns with similar sizes, shapes and magazines to actual firearms. But he also points out that some are made with transparent or colored plastic to set them apart.

A spokeswoman with the Toy Industry Association, based in New York City, did not immediately return a message left Tuesday seeking comment.

The line between real and fake is less blurred at the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said his office focuses on the intent of the criminal to determine what charges will be filed.

For instance, someone who uses an airsoft or BB gun to hold up a convenience store could be charged with armed robbery, a Class B felony. It carries a heftier sentence than robbery when a weapon is not involved.
"A lot of these BB guns, if you look at them in a split second, look real to a store clerk or a police officer," Harrington said. "It goes toward the intent of what they're trying to do -- what the victim perceives the crime as being. Even if it's a real gun that was not loaded, that is an inconsequential aspect.

"Laws are written to protect the public and the citizens."

March 17, 2009: WLFI TV

Domestic dispute leads to prison time
Doug Wilson pleads to confinement case

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Mar 2009, 3:56 PM EDT
Published : Tuesday, 17 Mar 2009, 3:56 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County man is going to prison for ten years for forcing his former girlfriend into his vehicle and confining her.

Doug H. Wilson, 34, pleaded guilty to Domestic Battery, Possession of Marijuana While Having a Prior Conviction, and for being a Habitual Offender.

Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said the charges stem from an incident on June 16, 2008. "Wilson forcibly removed the victim, his girlfriend, from a car, forced her into his truck, and drove her against her will to a house they shared," said McVey in a news release. “The event was witnessed by 3 young children that were in the truck during the offense. Marijuana was found in the defendant's truck."

The defendant has prior convictions from Florida and Georgia for Vehicle Theft, Burglary, Possession of Methamphetamine, and Fraud. The defendant resided in Tippecanoe County from October 2007 until the offense occurred in June of 2008.

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Elizabeth Goodrich argued the case for the State of Indiana.

March 6, 2009: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for record cocaine bust
One of area's largest drug seizures

Updated: Friday, 06 Mar 2009, 5:54 PM EST
Published : Friday, 06 Mar 2009, 4:19 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A sentencing came on March 6 in what prosecutors believe is one of the largest cocaine seizures in the Lafayette area.

Sergio Neri-Ortiz, 30, pleaded guilty to dealing cocaine. Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch sentenced Ortiz to 40 years in prison.

Ortiz was arrested in April as part of a drug task force investigation. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said officers seized cocaine at 914 N. 8th Street in Lafayette. Harrington said officers found 2.5 kilos (or nearly five pounds of cocaine) with a street value of $250,000. "The drugs were hidden all over the house," said Harrington. "They even found some cocaine inside a six year old child's backpack." Harrington said the child tested positive for cocaine.

Harrington said police believe Ortiz was a major player in drug trafficking in the Lafayette area.

February 25, 2009: Monticello Herald Journal

Claypool murder case gets boost of support
Anonymous tip line, bigger reward added to investigation efforts by state.

By KATIE DUFFEY, kduffey@thehj.com
Published: Wednesday, February 25, 2009 10:41 AM CST

Using the lure of an increased reward and the veil of anonymity, local law enforcement officers and the family of slain Twin Lakes teacher Judith Claypool are hopeful new details will surface in the Dec. 28 murder case.

“We appreciate the support of the community. At this time we have placed our trust in local law enforcement officers, and have faith that it will be resolved,” stated Claypool’s brother Ken Houston, speaking on behalf of the family for the first time since the killing.

“We would hope that anyone with information would come forward.”

A partnership formed with the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor’s Office, investigators hope, will allow for information to be more forthcoming regarding the 67-year-old’s murder — the result of an apparent invasion of her lakeside home.

“Everyone is concerned that it hasn’t been resolved, myself included. One’s expectation often is that these cases are solved soon after they are committed, and that is far-fetched. I do echo their concern however,” said White County Prosecutor Robert Guy. “It is not from a lack of effort, but a lack of information.”

According to Guy, Cpl. Scott Brown with the Indiana State Police informed him of a service used by the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor’s Office that allows individuals with information regarding a specific crime to make reports with explicit anonymity.

“He (Brown) indicated to me that we may be able to utilize this resource in our investigation on a one-time basis to piggyback with Tippecanoe County,” said Guy.

“The unique thing about WeTip is that it has an anonymous hotline that they believe has a greater capacity of generating information because it does allow a person to remain anonymous.”

Launched in May of last year as part of Tippecanoe County’s Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative, WeTip is a results-driven non-profit agency that officials say above all places the importance on assisting law enforcement solve cases.

“After meeting with citizens, civic groups, businesses and neighborhood associations it became clear that there was a hesitancy to report illegal activity to police,” said Kathryn Redd, Project Safe Neighborhoods/Anti-Gang Initiative Coordinator for Tippecanoe County, who attested to WeTip’s immediate success stories.

“We have received in excess of 500 criminal activity reports, from 36 different counties in Indiana, since the program began.”

According to the WeTip Web site, all calls are anonymous — not just confidential. Where confidential calls can be subpoenaed for legal purposes, anonymous phone calls cannot be traced or taped.

When calling the hotline, 800-78-CRIME, an informant is instantly informed that “This is the WeTip Crime Hotline, do not give your name or identify yourself in anyway.” If at any time the caller starts to identify themselves, the operator will disconnect the call.

Once anonymity has been established, the operator takes the caller through a series of about 65 questions — a lengthy list aimed at eliciting as much information from the informant as possible. Finally, the caller is asked if “there is an arrest and conviction, are you interested in a reward?” If the answer is yes, the caller receives a three-part fictitious code name in addition to their tip number.

Once contacted regarding the Claypool case, Redd said her office immediately jumped at the opportunity to help White County investigators with the use of WeTip.

“When I was approached by the ISP on behalf of the White County Prosecutor for WeTip assistance, there was never a doubt that the executives at WeTip would provide the service,” said Redd. “Given the severity of the crime, this is a case where there are no jurisdictional boundaries.”

Since signing on with WeTip, Redd said Tippecanoe County has broken all records in the service’s 36-year history. Attesting to its usefulness locally, Redd also indicated that other Hoosier counties’ utilization of WeTip have paid major dividends in tracking down criminals.

“In early January, the Indiana State Police (in Lake County) asked for assistance from WeTip to assist in solving two cold-case gang murder cases,” said Redd. “WeTip was happy to accommodate them in trying to bring the perpetrators to justice.”

As White County’s case is added to the WeTip database, flyers advertising the hotline, along with an increase in reward money, are being circulated throughout the community — with plans also on the way for a billboard to be placed in Monticello alerting residents to WeTip.

Last month, Monticello businessman Don Rollheiser offered $5,000 to the prosecutor’s office as a reward for any information leading to the capture and conviction of Claypool’s murderer. Spurred by this action, two local groups have recently come forward with additional pledges of money to help in the investigation.

According to Guy, the Class of ’59 and Friends, as well as Twin Lakes School Corporation members, have helped the reward available swell to $10,000 — a total inflated further still with the promise of up to $1,000 from WeTip.

“There is someone who knows what happened, the key is making sure that person understands the program and knows there is a 100 percent anonymous method to report what they know,” asserted Redd. “It takes the determination of the community to get the word out.”

Anyone with information regarding Claypool's murder is encouraged to contact either Detective Patrick Shafer with the White County Sheriff's Office at 574-583-5121, or make their report anonymously with WeTip by dialing 1-800-78-CRIME.

Visit www.wetip.com for more information.

February 26, 2009: WLFI TV

Suspect extradited for 2002 murder case
Teresa Pacheco returned from Mexico

Updated: Thursday, 26 Feb 2009, 11:04 AM EST
Published : Wednesday, 25 Feb 2009, 4:23 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A 2002 Tippecanoe County murder case may soon see resolution. A suspect in the case was successfully extradited from Mexico on Wednesday.

Teresa Pacheco is charged with the shooting his former girlfriend Juanita Santarrosa. Police say Pacheco fled the Lafayette area after Santa Rosa was found dead along Lilly Road in September 2002.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Pacheco was put on a plane in Mexico, and arrived at the Houston airport this afternoon.

"Representatives of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department and a local FBI agent are escorting Pacheco," said Harrington. "Pacheco will arrive in Tippecanoe County overnight."

Court documents show the murder charge is based on DNA evidence from a green Pontiac Pacheco was using. It was abandoned in Utah and detectives found blood in the front passenger seat.

Pacheco was located in Mexico about a year ago, and is expected to make a court appearance this week.

February 17, 2009: WLFI TV

New anti-gang website online
Comprehensive site for parents and teachers

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Feb 2009, 5:52 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 17 Feb 2009, 5:36 PM EST

Niccole Caan

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A new anti-gang website for parents and educators is now online. The Teachers Against Gangs site began this week. Website members can ask questions in forums, look at gang symbols and post gang related photos and video.

Kathryn Redd, the Anti-Gang Initiative Coordinator for the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office, describes the site as a comprehensive place to find out about gangs. "It's just pulling that information together so that the community has one place they can go and gather these things. We'll also have news reports, any current studies that are out," said explained. Redd will be an administrator for the site.

Also, developed recently was a companion anti-gang website for law enforcement: Gang Cops Online. It's a place for officers to share information confidentially.

February 11, 2009: **WLFI TV**

Rapist likely to spend life in prison
Jeffrey Akard sentenced to 93 years

Updated: Wednesday, 11 Feb 2009, 7:16 PM EST
Published : Wednesday, 11 Feb 2009, 6:41 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - A Lafayette rape victim told a judge she wanted her attacker to be put away, so that he cannot hurt anyone else.

Jeffrey Akard, 34, was sentenced to 93 years in prison by Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch.

A jury found the former Purdue student guilty of repeatedly raping the woman and confining her in his apartment for 15 hours in September 2006.
Akard is already serving nearly 20 years in prison on federal child pornography charges. Police found the materials while investigating the rape.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says the victim testified she didn't think she would make it out of Akard's apartment alive. Police said the woman had gone voluntarily to Akard's home, but when she wanted to leave, Akard put her in restraints. Investigators said Akard shocked her several times with a stun gun, threatened her with a handgun, and sexually assaulted her several times.

January 23, 2009: **WLFI TV**

WeTip Hotline honored
Hotlines less than a year old

Updated: Friday, 23 Jan 2009, 10:17 AM EST
Published : Thursday, 22 Jan 2009, 11:49 PM EST

- Niccole Caan

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County's WeTip Hotline will receive a national award after being in operation less than a year.

The hotline will be honored at the national WeTip Conference for having the most calls per capita. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington says the community is what makes the program so successful in our area.

"The reward is for everyone in the community. I think it's tremendous everyone has excepted this and they will call the anonymous tip line and report crimes when they see them or they have any information about a crime that has occurred. It's very rewarding," said Harrington.

Tippecanoe's WeTip is eight months old and already 475 tips have been taken. Harrington attributes part of the program's success to News Channel 18 distributing the number during newscasts.

"We noted that after Channel 18 uses the number we will see large tips the following 2-3 days," he explained.

Harrington will teach other counties in the nation how to make their hotlines successful at the WeTip national

conference in California in April.

He believes the key is marketing the program to many different groups including schools, churches, neighborhood associations and businesses

---

January 21, 2009: WLFI TV

Lafayette man charged with murder
Jeremy Knoy accused in beating death

Updated: Monday, 29 Dec 2008, 2:36 PM EST
Published : Monday, 29 Dec 2008, 2:23 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind - The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor has charged a Lafayette man with one count of murder.

Jeremy Douglas Knoy, 25, is accused of killing Derek Liphard of Indianapolis on December 26. Knoy is being held in the Tippecanoe County jail without bond.

Officers were called to Knoy's house at 2312 North 19th Street around 9:00p.m. Police say a man was found dead inside the house with massive head injuries. The Affidavit of Probable Cause said Knoy talked to detectives at LPD. According to the document, "While Knoy smelled of alcohol he did not appear to be impaired. He spoke clearly and forthrightly with police. Knoy and Liphard had smoked some marijuana together, drank alcohol and were hanging out. In the late afternoon, Knoy and Liphard had visited relatives in Americus, then returned to Knoy's house. Knoy recalled that he noticed the time on the microwave clock was 7:33p.m. Knoy said that he couldn't recall what happened next, but remembered standing over Liphard striking him with a baseball bat. Knoy was unable to explain why or how the events began that resulted in his beating Liphard with a bat."

According to the Affidavit, Knoy admitted that he and Liphard had been friends since childhood.

January 28, 2009: Pharos-Tribune - McClatchy-Tribune

Monticello woman accused of theft: Bookkeeper reportedly confessed to embezzling more than $20,000

A Monticello woman has reportedly confessed to stealing more than $20,000 from a public library and local soccer league.

On Tuesday morning, 38-year-old Kimberly K. Helms turned herself in at the White County Sheriff's Department after a year-long investigation into her activities as bookkeeper for the Monticello-Union Township Public Library and Twin Lakes Soccer Association. She was arrested on six class C felony counts of forgery and four class D felony counts of theft.

Based on an investigation by the Indiana State Police White Collar Crime Division and the Indiana State Board of Accounts, Helms is accused of writing 21 library checks to herself for nearly $15,000, making $3,640 in payments from library funds to cover personal credit card accounts and stealing more than $5,000 from the Twin Lakes Soccer Association.

Helms is also accused of using library credit cards on multiple occasions for personal use, then reportedly put the charges in the names of co-workers.

According to court records, Helms admitted to the misuse of funds and reportedly paid back $5,000 to the soccer league on March 10, 2008. The criminal activity dates back to 2006.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington has been called in as special prosecutor to handle the case because Helms is married to a White County sheriff's deputy. Harrington pointed out that Helms' alleged criminal activity began before her marriage to the deputy, who is not being charged.

Helms was booked into the White County Jail on a $10,000 cash bond. If convicted, she faces up to eight years in prison for each class C felony and up to three years in prison for each class D felony.

Kevin Lilly can be reached at (574) 732-5117 , or via e-mail at kevin.lilly@pharostribune.com

---

December 12, 2008: WLFI TV

Heroin dealer sentenced
Essu Brunson receives 40 year term

Updated: Friday, 12 Dec 2008, 4:27 PM EST
Published : Friday, 12 Dec 2008, 4:26 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - An Illinois man is sentenced to 40 years in prison for selling drugs in the Lafayette area and hitting a police officer with his car.

Essu Brunson, 32, pleaded guilty to dealing heroin and resisting law enforcement. Brunson was arrested in June for selling about $1,000 of heroin to an undercover police officer near the Market Square Shopping Center. According to Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey, "the Lafayette Police Department Street Crimes Unit made three controlled narcotics
purchases of heroin from Brunson."

She said after the sale, officers arrived on the scene. As Brunson tried to flee, he rammed his vehicle into a van where officer A-J DeMello and his K-9 were standing. Demello suffered a knee injury. The dog was not hurt.

December 8, 2008: WLFI TV

Gang crimes on the rise
Tippecanoe County housing targeted

Last Edited: Monday, 08 Dec 2008, 6:19 PM EST
Created On: Monday, 08 Dec 2008, 6:19 PM EST

Renetta DuBose

Lafayette - Kathryn Redd, who works with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor, said the best way to decrease gang activity is for the community to step up.

It's gang fights, like one recently posted on YouTube with students behind the Big Lots store in Lafayette, that has authorities beefing up enforcement. Redd said crimes like graffiti and drug trafficking are being done by some former Chicago Housing Authority residents now calling Lafayette home.

"Criminal CHA clients are exploiting the system by setting up drug sales and distribution operations in complexes throughout our county," said Redd.

"Anytime you have housing projects sometimes that opportunity presents itself. But we just all have to work diligently to combat that, to be warm and welcoming to the people that are coming for the right reasons," said

Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski.

Lafayette resident and Hammond native Blanca Acevez said not everyone moving from areas to the north participates in illegal activities. She said targeting young people with a positive message is key.
"There's no reason to carry a gun. You have every resource available to you to be successful. There's no reason for it. I think that needs to be advocated through the schools," said Acevez.

The prosecutor's office trained landlords in Tippecanoe County and local schools on how to operate with the We Tip crime reporting service. Redd said between May and September this year Tippecanoe County's "We Tip Hotline" has taken 137 tips and 411 "Reports of Criminal Activities." She hopes the results encourage people to speak up.
"By conveying our priorities and our message and the results of this enhanced enforcement, we have the opportunity to demonstrate to the community, that they have the power to do something, that they have the power to act," said Redd.

Redd said graffiti is down but there is a turf war between the Latin Kings and the Latin Dragons at McCutcheon High School. She said Lafayette Jefferson High School is the number one school for gang recruitment.

December 2, 2008: WLFI TV

Welch charged in death of student
Prosecutor charges Welch on eight counts

Updated: Tuesday, 02 Dec 2008, 6:55 PM EST
Published : Tuesday, 02 Dec 2008, 4:21 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington has charged a Texas man with eight counts stemming from a crash that killed a Harrison High School student.

Joseph Welch, 30, of Galena, Texas, faces six felony charges including reckless homicide and operating while intoxicated causing death.

Court documents said surveillance video from the Marathon-Village Pantry at U.S. 52 and Morehouse Road on November 23 shows Welch ran a red light at Win Hentschel Boulevard. Then, Welch had a red light at Morehouse Road, where he collided with a car driven by Katherine Baker, 16, of West Lafayette. Baker died from blunt force trauma.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said cooperation from Village Pantry Corporate offices was instrumental to the investigation. "We appreciate their assistance with this case," said Harrington. "I also want to thank members of our FACT, fatal alcohol crash team, for all of their diligence in pursing evidence in this case."
Court records said Welch had been drinking at Cox's Pub prior to the crash. According to the Affidavit of Probable Cause, "During an interview Welch admitted drinking alcohol at the bar prior to the crash, but said he did not think he was intoxicated. Welch still claimed that he had a green light, and claimed there were other vehicles there at the time of the crash."

Welch is expected to appear before a judge for an initial hearing on Wednesday.
The court documents said Welch was convicted of Operating While Intoxicated in Dickinson County, Iowa in June 2007.

November 7, 2008: WLFI TV

Man sentenced for pointing firearm at officer

Robert Lee Scott gets 29 year sentence

Updated: Friday, 07 Nov 2008, 6:34 PM EST
Published : Friday, 07 Nov 2008, 6:34 PM EST

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - A man convicted of murder in Florida is going back to prison for crimes committed in Lafayette.

Robert Lee Scott, 41, was sentenced to 29 years in prison. Last month a jury found Scott guilty of several charges. They include Battery with a Deadly Weapon, Resisting Law Enforcement and Pointing a Firearm. Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel found Scott guilty of being a Serious Violent Felon in Possession of a Firearm. "Martin will serve the entire 29 years in the Indiana Department of Corrections and faces a hold for Florida authorities on parole violations and other charges when he completes his prison sentence in Indiana," according to a news release from the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office.

The charges stem from Scott threatening a bartender and pointing a gun at a Lafayette Police Officer January.

Scott was convicted of murder in Florida in 1984 and was out on parole in January when he was arrested in this case.

October 31, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Cocaine dealer sentenced to prison
Jamaal Moore sold cocaine in Lafayette area

Updated: Friday, 31 Oct 2008, 5:35 PM EDT
Published : Friday, 31 Oct 2008, 5:34 PM EDT

- Sue Scott

LAFAYETTE - A former Chicago man is going to prison for 38 years for selling cocaine at a Lafayette apartment complex.

A jury found Jamaal Moore, 27, guilty of several drug charges during a trial earlier this month. Moore's arrest was the result of a drug task force investigation. Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says Moore sold crack cocaine at Country View estates at least four times in September 2007.

Harrington said Moore has previous convictions of delivering and possession of cocaine in Cook County.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Jury convicts man of dealing cocaine

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:27 AM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:27 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -- A jury deliberated about 2 hours before finding a man guilty of selling cocaine at a Lafayette apartment complex. Antonio Sessions, 27, was found guilty of dealing and possession of cocaine.

Sessions was arrested in October 2007 as a result of an investigation by the Lafayette street crimes unit and drug task force at Country View Estates. "He sold crack cocaine to an undercover officer at Country View Estates," said Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Tippecanoe Superior 2 Judge Tom Busch also found Sessions to be a Habitual Offender and Habitual Substance

Offender. Harrington said Sessions has prior convictions for delivery of a controlled substance in 1998 and 2003 in Cook County, Illinois. He was convicted of possession of cocaine in 2004 in Tippecanoe County.

Session faces up 80 years in prison when he's sentenced on October 24th.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Former foster parent sentenced for child molesting

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:18 AM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:18 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI)--A former foster parent is sentenced to four years in prison for child molesting. Paul Ray Smith, 45, of Lafayette pleaded guilty to two felony counts of child molesting.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Smith molested a young girl that was placed in his care. "Police officers investigated to see that there were any other victims," said Harrington. "There is no evidence Smith was involved with any other children in his home."

At the time of Smith was charged in April, Villages CEO Sharon Pierce said the Smiths had been licensed as foster parents for more than 2 years. During that time 21 foster children lived with the family.
After he's released from prison, Smith will serve two years on house arrest with GPS monitoring, then two years on probation.

October 9, 2008: WLFI TV

Convicted drug dealer sentenced

Updated: Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:20 AM EDT
Published : Thursday, 09 Oct 2008, 9:20 AM EDT

- LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI) -- A convicted drug dealer was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in prison. In June, a Tippecanoe Superior Two jury found Jeffery Anderson Junior, 26, of Chicago guilty of dealing and possession of cocaine. Anderson was arrested as part of a drug task force investigation last March. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said undercover officers purchased drugs from Anderson on two occasions. "He said officers with a search warrant found more than 56 grams of cocaine and a thousand dollars in cash at his apartment," said Harrington.

October 7, 2008: WLFI TV

Area schools to implement crime hotline

Updated: Oct 7, 2008 06:20 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Schools in Tippecanoe County may soon have access to the national crime hotline already used throughout the community. You may have heard of calling We-Tip to report crime in the community. Now, the goal is to expand the reporting of crime seen or threatened at area schools.

Klondike Middle School principal Chris Cannon said she feels WeTip is needed.

"The influx of gangs and gang activities, I think more and more, we see that in Tippecanoe County. I think it's important to be proactive. To have something the students will be able to access," said Cannon.

WeTip Chief Executive Officer Susan Aguilar said WeTip has seen all types of problems in its 36 year history.

"Just about every single crime that has gone out into the community has happened in the schools. Fraud, drugs, vandalism, graffiti, threats, bullying," said Aguilar.

And the caller reporting any crime remains completely anonymous.

"If the informant tried to identify themselves in anyway we tell them we have to disconnect this call. You're going to have to call back and get a different operator because we cannot know who you are. Then we have no tapping, tracing or caller ID," said Aguilar.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office funds the $10,000 a year program. Project Safe Neighborhood and Gang Initiative Grant Coordinator Kathryn Redd said the WeTip call center received 560 criminal reports since it started in Tippecanoe County last May.

"At least 70 percent of them involve children in some way, shape or form," said Redd.

Tippecanoe School Corporation's Director of Administrative Services Christy Fraley said TSC may also be on board.

"We see a lot of different tips. Our students and our parents report anything that they see that they're uncomfortable with at school and really aren't comfortable with telling an administrator or a teacher at the school," said Fraley.

To report a crime on the WeTip hotline call (800)-78-CRIME. Crimes can also be reported at www.wetip.com.

A reward up to $1,000 is offered for helpful information.

Report by Renetta DuBose, WLFI.

July 7, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Internet predator convicted

One of 24 people arrested statewide in 2006 during an internet predator sting operation has been convicted in Federal Court of soliciting sex with a police officer posing as a 13 year old girl.

The statewide operation included several local law enforcement agencies, including the Lafayette Police Department, Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department and the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office.

Jeffrey P. Taylor, 39, of Logansport was recently convicted in a Hammond Federal Courtroom following a one and a half day jury trial, according to a press release from the United States Attorney's Office in Hammond.

June 30, 2008: WLFI TV

New tipline yields nearly 80 crime reports

Updated: June 30, 2008 02:18 PM EDT

Reported by Alyssa Rossomme, WLFI

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A new hotline has collected nearly 80 crime tips from people in Tippecanoe County in just one month. The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office started the WeTip anonymous crime tip-line on June first. Project Safe Neighborhood Coordinator Kathryn Redd said so far, citizens have made 78 reports of illegal activity

through WeTip. She said some of the tips involve more than one crime. Redd said detailed information given by anonymous tippers is helping police investigate crime in specific neighborhoods. She said she is pleased with the number of callers looking out for the well-being of children.

"People are paying attention to [illegal activity], and people are paying attention to the children. So I found that very encouraging," said Redd.

Anyone can provide information about a crime or suspicious activity completely anonymously. Sheriff Tracy Brown said while police prefer witnesses use their name when reporting tips, anonymous information is better than no information at all.

"The one thing we're very keen on right now, obviously because the clock is ticking for the courthouse bombing. We've had some tips come in through the WeTip line, not only for that, but we continue to get tips for other criminal activity. And it's a pretty wide range. Everything from misdemeanor conduct, to serious felonies are being reported through WeTip so it's going to be a benefit for us," said Brown.

"I would just encourage people to call, if for some reason they're not comfortable with calling law enforcement, or calling another support agency that we have in Tippecanoe County to call WeTip," added Redd.

Anyone can report a crime or suspicious activity 24 hours a day by calling the WeTip hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME. WeTip offers a reward of up to $1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a criminal.

June 26, 2008: Lafayette Leader

Value of safety

Project Safe Neighborhoods launched in Tippecanoe County

By Rebecca Edwards
fcnrebecca@sbcglobal.net

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington first heard about a program called Project Safe Neighborhoods while at a conference in the spring of 2007.

He soon applied for a grant to implement the program in Tippecanoe County. The $53,000 grant was awarded and the funds were received last fall.

Shortly thereafter, program coordinator Kathryn Redd was hired to orchestrate the complex program, which is purposed to give rental property owners and managers the tools and motivation to make their properties less conducive to criminal activity.

Aproximately ninety percent of crime in Tippecanoe County occurs at rental properties, Harrington said. "That's why the program is so important to our community."

Harrington said that he was made aware of the severity of Tippecanoe County's drug and gang crime situation during his first days as prosecutor.

"When I took office, the community basically told me the largest problem for our community was gang and drug activity. This grant addresses those activities."

The Project Safe Neighborhood program involves training sessions for rental property managers and owners, which equip them to identify changes they can make to the dwellings they manage which will make them safer, up-to-code and also help eliminate the tendency for criminals to gravitate to their properties.

The program also incorporates the implementation of the WeTip crime hotline (1-800-78-CRIME), a one hundred percent anonymous tip-line, operated by a non-profit organization.

WeTip offers rewards to tippers whose information leads to the arrest and conviction of a criminal in Tippecanoe County. Callers are asked if they would like to receive a reward if their tip results in a conviction. They are then given a three name code which will be their means of collecting their reward.

According to Kathryn Redd, the hotline will help ensure that illegal activity is reported, an essential component of the Project Safe Neighborhood program. She said her passion for the program comes from her concern for the people and children whose quality of life suffers as a result of living in an unsafe environment where drug and gang activity is taking place.

"The purpose is to teach property owners and managers how to take steps and put guidelines in place to keep their property and residents safe and maintain property value. For me personally, its all about the people," said Redd. "Ensuring children have safe conditions to live and play."

Redd has partnered with all five law enforcement jurisdictions within Tippecanoe County to ensure the success of PSN and WeTip.

She has also gained the support of almost all of the area schools, which got WeTip flyers in the hands of students just before school let out for summer break.

The first training session for rental property owners takes place next Monday and Tuesday, but registration is closed because the sessions are full.

However, property managers can still sign up for sessions being held throughout the summer. The next sessions are already half full and will take place July 21 and 22.

After that, interested individuals can sign up for the third set of classes, August 4 and 5.

Property owners can sign up by email: kredd@tippecanoe.in.gov

Property owners can sign up by phone at: 765-413-7238.

June 20, 2008: United States Attorney's Office L.E.C.C. Informant 4: Volume 6, Issue 2; United States Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office Northern District of Indiana

Project Safe Neighborhoods in Tippecanoe County

Patrick K. Harrington, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor, and Kathryn J. Redd, Tippecanoe Project Safe Neighborhood/Gang Initiative Coordinator, are pleased to announce the first phase of the launch of the TIPPECANOE COUNTY WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hotline.

(On Right at Microphone) Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Patrick Harrington makes opening comments during a press conference announcing Project Safe Neighborhood/Gang Anti-Crime accomplishments on May 28, 2008 at Duncan Hall in Lafayette, Indiana.

In response to the citizens desire to become an active partner with law enforcement in ridding their neighborhoods of illegal activities and crime, all Tippecanoe County law enforcement agencies have partnered with We Tip on the war against crime.

By incorporating, We Tip Municipal, Law Enforcement, and School programs into a comprehensive initiative, all citizens are assured that they can use the system and that their crime tips will be forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

As the first phase of the We Tip program, over 65,000 flyers will be distributed, through the schools, to every child in Tippecanoe School Corporation, Lafayette School Corporation, and West Lafayette Community School Corporation. Based on the model used in the Compton Unified School District, in California, each child will be given three flyers and asked to distribute one to each neighbor adjacent to their home.

This grassroots initiative puts the power back in the hands of the citizens and away from those involved in illegal activity.

We Tip operates "800" toll-free lines, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by trained operators who are able to field calls in English and Spanish and with a TIDY machine for the hearing-impaired.

We Tip is one of the most effective tools that we can use to keep our community safe.
The We Tip Hotline will be live on June 1.

Further announcements will be made at the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Project Safe Neighborhood Anti-Crime Initiatives Press Conference on May 28, 2008 at 5:00pm, Duncan Hall. Susan Aguilar, WeTip CEO, will be speaking to the press at that time.

June 8, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Safety program to train landlords

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Deb Evans and her husband, Jim, own and manage two apartment buildings on Lafayette's south end, along with smaller properties in West Lafayette and Rossville.

Over the last couple of years, some tenants have been victims of vehicle break-ins and property thefts. A few others were worried that neighbors had been involved in illegal drug use.

"It wasn't this way two years ago, but things seem to be going steadily in this direction," said Deb Evans, a lifelong Tippecanoe County resident who was raised in Battle Ground.

"We do try to stay on top of things and screen our tenants as best as possible. We are very hands-on and do everything, management-wise, ourselves."

The Evanses are among dozens of rental property owners who will take part in landlord training through Project Safe Neighborhoods, an anti-crime initiative recently announced by the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The first six- to eight-hour class is expected to begin early this summer.

Kathy Redd, an investigator with the prosecutor's office and the program's coordinator, said a large part of the training will focus on steps rental property owners should take before accepting a tenant.

The class also will go over standards for safe and decent housing.

"It goes through the role of checking the applicant -- setting criteria that they want for their property, bearing in mind fair housing laws," Redd said. "They could choose to have all vehicles parked on their property be registered. ... They could require that applications only be accepted in person."

Redd, who had been meeting with rental property owners and neighborhood groups since December, said she came across several incidents of applications being sent to Chicago on a weekly basis.

To ensure that everyone is treated fairly, Redd said, standards set by property owners should be applied to all applicants.

"That's where it does become challenging," she said. "But you can't do it to one potential tenant and not another. That's absolutely imperative."

Deb Evans said she is excited for the program to start. She and her husband took part in one of the focus groups hosted by Redd.

"I am really impressed," Evans said. "My husband and I walked away feeling like we have somebody on our side. This has always been a great community. We need to keep it that way."

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a federal program that larger cities nationwide have used to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism. Tippecanoe County received its $52,398 grant last summer.

Data from the Lafayette Police Department shows a rise in narcotics-related investigations, from 410 in 2004 to 632 in 2007. Aggravated assaults -- batteries that resulted in seriously bodily injury -- also steadily rose during the same time frame, from 147 in 2004 to 194 in 2007.

Officials say they hope that Project Safe Neighborhoods will help drive those crime numbers down. The program also falls under "weeding" efforts for Weed & Seed, another federal initiative Lafayette is participating in to combat crime.

Ken Weller, executive director of Legal Aid Corp. of Tippecanoe County, applauds the efforts of the prosecutor's office. But he also has concerns.

"I'm not convinced that if they target rental property tenants, all our problems are going to magically disappear," he said. "They will just move elsewhere in the Lafayette area. Some attention needs to be paid to that.

" ... Some criminals, too, are homeowners."

Weller has been working on a standard lease that he would like to see used in Tippecanoe County. He has had clients who have had no written lease from their landlords.

"This whole program is very interesting," Weller said. "But Tippecanoe County has such a wide variety of tenants that they may have to take a more individual approach than originally envisioned."

May 29, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Leaders aim to crack down on crime before it gets out of hand

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

In the early '90s, when residents of Historic Ninth Street Hill learned someone was selling drugs out of a home there, neighbors sat nearby and recorded the license plate numbers of vehicles seen leaving the home.

"I was mad," Jane Boswell said. "How dare people do that in our nice neighborhood."

Now Ninth Street Hill -- and much of Tippecanoe County -- is dealing with illegal drug activity on a larger and more frequent scale. Getting a strong hold on a problem before it worsens is one of the key initiatives behind Project Safe Neighborhoods.

Representatives of law enforcement, local dignitaries, the prosecutor's office and other Tippecanoe County officials came together Wednesday at Duncan Hall to formally introduce the federal anti-crime and anti-gang program.

"It's critical that we attack the problem now," said Kathy Redd, an investigator with the prosecutor's office and the Project Safe Neighborhoods' coordinator. "If we don't handle it aggressively, it is quite possible for us to lose this city in three years, according to trends."

Redd, who was raised in Lafayette, has spent the last year researching crime trends and analyzing trouble spots in Tippecanoe County.

During a ride-along with the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, she witnessed firsthand suspected cocaine dealers on street corners.

After handing out fliers for WeTip, an anonymous hotline residents can call to report illegal activity, she was threatened by suspected gang members.

And in Redd's conversations and meetings with residents, she encountered dozens of people who said they knew of crimes taking place but feared reporting them.

"We are facing a problem with safety," Redd said. "We're seeing the degradation of neighborhoods. There is no one person to blame. What Project Safe Neighborhoods is trying to do is mobilize the community -- that's it is up to all of us to fight this."

Project Safe Neighborhoods also has been implemented in Allen, Lake and Saint Joseph counties, said David Capp, interim U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana.

Each community was allowed to use the grant -- $53,398 for Tippecanoe County -- to address its most prevalent problem.

"I knew there were some growing law enforcement issues in Tippecanoe County. They were seeing an influx of problems from the south side of Chicago and Lake County," Capp said. "We felt this was an area that we should start focusing on."

Boswell, a resident of Historic Ninth Street Hill for more than 30 years, was part of a focus group to inform neighborhoods about the program.

Part of Project Safe Neighborhoods includes training rental property owners how to recognize signs and, proactively, better screen applicants before they become tenants.

"We started seeing changes in our neighborhood in the last couple of years," Boswell said. "More and more crimes were being reported. We are a diverse neighborhood with a nice bell-shaped curve of ages and incomes.

"But to have gang-related vandalism and gang graffiti, it was very unnerving."

Residents there soon plan to create window clings to hang in their vehicles that will identify them as part of the neighborhood. That way, Boswell said, police will more easily recognize cars that are out of place.

It's this kind of community cooperation that officials -- among them Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski, West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis and Prosecutor Pat Harrington -- hope to encourage.

Russell Conard, who graduated this past weekend from Harrison High School, too urges the community to recognize a problem does exist. He pointed out the recent knife fight at Faith Community Center, in which five people were injured, as an example.

Conard lives near the center and exercises there.

"There's rising violence in our community," he said. "I have to admit that it's quite unsettling."

May 29, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

New project gives crime fighters a major ally

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Officials on Wednesday formally announced the start of Project Safe Neighborhoods in Tippecanoe County.

The federal program is an anti-crime and anti-gang initiative that larger cities have implemented to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism.

Project Safe Neighborhoods will take proactive and reactive approaches to fight crime.

Part of the funding will be used to train rental property owners in ways to keep out illegal activity, in part by training them to better screen potential tenants.

The second aspect is the launch of WeTip, an anonymous hotline that residents can use to report crime tips to any law enforcement agency.

THE BACKGROUND

Last summer, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office received a $53,398 grant for the initiative. Funding was used to hire an investigator and project coordinator and to purchase notebook computers so that police can track and analyze trouble spots.

David Capp, interim U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana, said he approached Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington about the program as a way to address growing problems believed to stem from criminals originally from Chicago and northwest Indiana.

THE IMPACT

Jane Boswell is a resident of Historic Ninth Street Hill in Lafayette, where about one-third of the neighborhood is rental properties.

Herself a rental property owner, Boswell was one of dozens who participated in focus groups for Project Safe Neighborhoods.

"Lafayette is not the same as it was 20 years ago," she said.

"I don't believe that any neighborhood in Lafayette is immune to problems were are seeing as a community."

May 29, 2008: WLFI TV

Community members learn about new crime tip-line

Updated: May 29, 2008 04:26 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's office has launched a crime tip-line to get citizens involved in keeping neighborhoods safe. Community members learned more about the tip-line in free WeTip training sessions. Susan Aguilar, WeTip C.E.O. said the hotline is used in hundreds of cities as a way for citizens to report crime or suspicious activity. Tips are passed on to local police for investigation.

"We have helped law enforcement to arrest over 15,000 criminals, we've taken nearly a half million tips and we have helped law enforcement confiscate $340 million worth of illegal drugs and narcotics. So we've made a real impact on communities all over the nation," said Aguilar.

Aguilar said WeTip is effective, primarily because callers are completely anonymous. WeTip does not record or trace calls, and the phone system does not have caller I.D.

"We tell our informants, 'Do not give your name or identify yourself in any way.' If they try to identify themselves, we have to hang up that phone and tell them, 'Call back, talk to a different operator, we cannot know who you are,'" she explained.

Tracy Walder, a member of the St. Lawrence-McAllister Neighborhood Association, participated in a training session.

"The anonymous aspect is probably the greatest part of it. And just the fact that they have access to so many law enforcement agencies," she said.

WeTip offers a reward of up to $1000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a criminal. The WeTip number is 1-800-78-CRIME

May 28, 2008: WLFI TV

New crime fighting program announced

Updated: May 28, 2008 03:18 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, Ind (WLFI)--A new community initiative is aimed at fighting crime in Tippecanoe County.

The new initiative, "Project Safe Neighborhoods" is designed to keep illegal activities out of rental properties. Project Safe Neighborhoods Gang Initiative Coordinator Kathryn Redd said the project includes a free training program for rental property owners and managers. "We hope to educate them home to keep illegal activity out of their properties," said Redd. "Today it's something they really need to give consideration to because at a minimum 90% of all crimes are being committed out of individuals living in rental properties."

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Project Safe Neighborhoods has proved to reduce crime in communities across the country. "We felt law enforcement agencies and myself that it was important to start this program to try to reduce the crime in those high crime areas," said Harrington.

Another effort Harrington hopes will help is WeTip, a toll-free anonymous crime tip-line. "It goes right along with PSN, because it gives a vehicle for the community to become involved in fighting crime, one neighborhood at a time, and taking back our neighborhoods," said Harrington.

The "We Tip" Tippecanoe County tip-line is funded by the Prosecutor's Office to get the community involved in fighting illegal activity. Any citizen over the age of five can make an anonymous tip by calling 1-800-78-CRIME.

There are 9 WeTip training sessions tomorrow for community members. The 30 minute sessions are held in the Grand Prairie Conference Room at the Tippecanoe County Office Building. The County Office building is located at 20 N. Third Street in Lafayette. Session times are: 8:00a.m., 8:45a.m., 9:45a.m., 10:30a.m., 1:00p.m., 1:45p.m., 6:30p.m., 7:00p.m., 7:45p.m.

Susan Aguilar, Chief Executive Officer, WeTip, and Sue Mandell, Director of Marketing, WeTip, will be providing an introduction to the new WETip Anonymous Crime Tip line program. The sessions are limited to 20 people. If you would like to attend send an email to kredd@tippecanoe.in.gov. Please indicate what session you would like to attend.

May 28, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Make a difference in your neighborhood

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Beginning Sunday, Tippecanoe County residents can anonymously report tips of illegal activity to any law enforcement agency.

Police and Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County schools recently partnered to launch the Tippecanoe County WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hot line. The hot line is part of the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office's new Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.

WeTip, a national nonprofit organization, staffs the toll-free line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, executive director Sue Mandell said. All tips will be forwarded within hours to the appropriate agency.

"We need citizens to be the eyes and ears for law enforcement," she said. "They can't do it alone anymore. We need to watch out for each other -- that's the key."

The phone number will be (800) 782-8463 or (800) 78 CRIME.

Earlier this month students in all three of the county's school corporations were sent home with three fliers announcing WeTip. They were asked to keep one and give the other two fliers to both adjacent neighbors.

More than 55,000 fliers have been distributed.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said WeTip has 100 percent confidentiality. For example, he said, if anyone gives their name during the call, they will be asked to hang up, call again and speak to a different operator.

May 19, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Law enforcement, schools to partner for crime tip line

STAFF REPORTS

Tippecanoe County residents will have a new way to report crime tips to any law enforcement agency this summer.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office announced in a news release today that agencies and schools will partner to launch the Tippecanoe County WeTip anonymous illegal activity reporting hotline. The hotline is part of the office's new Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative.

The WeTip hotline will forward all tips to the appropriate agency. WeTip, a national non-profit organization, staffs the toll-free line 24 hours per day.

The hotline will go live on June 1. The phone number will be (800) 782-8463 or (800) 78 CRIME.

The first phase of the launch will include sending fliers home with all students in the Lafayette, West Lafayette Community and Tippecanoe school corporations. Each child will receive three fliers and be asked to also deliver one to both adjacent neighbors.

A press conference on the initiative will be held at 5 p.m. May 28 at Duncan Hall

---

April 20, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Grand Prix partiers have day in court

By CURT SLYDER; cslyder@journalandcourier.com

Indiana University student Ashley Norman, 20, came to Purdue University last weekend to party with friends during the annual Grand Prix.

Less than a week later, she and 140 other Grand Prix revelers were in the Tippecanoe County Courthouse facing alcohol-related charges.

The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office and several courts held joint hearings Thursday morning for everyone facing alcohol charges they received during the weekend.

In three large groups, the defendants first watched a videotaped initial hearing in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 advising them of their rights and the potential penalties they faced, then were ushered off to one of three places to finalize their charges and pay fines.

"I thought it was pretty convenient," Norman said. "It was quick and easy."

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, the courts handled the cases that way to speed up the process.

Most of the people with first-time charges ended up with fines as well as enrollment in an alcohol program, either through the university or the court system, Harrington said. If they did everything as ordered there would be no permanent record.

"It's kind of a wake-up call," Harrington said. "We're saying you are accountable for your actions but we're not going to try to ruin your career."

Purdue students generally were ordered to enroll in an alcohol awareness class offered by the university Counseling and Psychological Services, or CAPS.

CAPS staff members were at the courthouse Thursday morning to enroll students in the class. The cost of the class was built into the court service fees, said CAPS clinical social worker Marty Green.

Many will have their classes next fall.

According to Cindy Houseman, director of Tippecanoe County Court Services, anyone living in Tippecanoe County who is not a Purdue student was ordered to take classes administered by Court Services.

Anyone from outside the area was enrolled in whatever classes are available in their area, Houseman said.

Of the 141 people arrested, 31 had their charges dropped, Houseman said.

Purdue sophomore Jordan Kirkegaard, 20, liked the streamlined process.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drug sweep nets cocaine, $300,000

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Authorities seized more than 5 pounds of cocaine and $300,000 in cash Monday from a residence on Lafayette's north end in what they're describing as the largest residential drug raid in Tippecanoe County in recent memory.

Three people were arrested after investigators served a warrant about 4 a.m. at an apartment at 914 N. Eight St. The Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force, the Indiana State Police drug enforcement section, the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit and a Purdue University police K-9 team assisted.

The Department of Child Services also was called when at least one elementary school-aged child was found inside, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

News of the arrests surprised neighbors who said they never suspected illegal activity there.

"They were all so friendly and respectful," said Rebecca McCreedy, who lives next door. "The police patrol this area pretty frequently. If anything like this happened, I'd guess it would be another house."
Harrington said authorities have been investigating one of the home's tenants, Sergio Neri-Ortiz, 29, since he sold cocaine to a confidential informant in September.

Neri-Ortiz was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony, and two counts of possession of cocaine, a Class A felony. He is being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on $250,000 bond.

Police also arrested Eleno Vasquez, 37, and Amanda Vasquez, 32, on suspicion of possession of cocaine. Both also reside at 914 N. Eighth St.

Harrington said the prosecutor's office is still reviewing charges against the Vasquezes and that one offense likely will be neglect of a dependent. They are being held in jail each on $50,000 bond.

He said the cocaine found inside -- roughly 2.5 kilos -- has an estimated street value of $250,000.
"This was a major drug recovery into a substantial drug ring in the Lafayette area," Harrington said. "With this substantial seizure, we hope to have slowed down the sale of drugs in the community."

McCreedy and her roommate, Laura Hickey, said they heard some yelling Monday morning and thought it might have been a domestic dispute. Then they noticed unmarked vehicles blocking both ends of their street.
The arrests happened so quietly that McCreedy went back to bed.

Hickey said she never noticed people coming and going from the home. "I'm used to seeing the kids playing outside. Everyone who lived there was so nice," Hickey said. "It was the same faces all the time. I don't remember their names, but we said hi. "It is really hard to process the information to tell you what I think. I am just really shocked."

Authorities made two additional arrests related to the same investigation.

Ismael Hernandez-Barradas, 32, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with dealing marijuana, a Class C felony; possession of marijuana, a Class D felony; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony. According to court documents, he is accused of selling marijuana out of his Summertime Trail residence to a confidential informant.

Tippecanoe County investigators on Monday also went to Crawfordsville and served a felony warrant on Ricardo Garcia, age unavailable. He's suspected of dealing cocaine in Montgomery County.

Harrington said Immigration and Customs Enforcement is checking into whether the five suspects are in the United States legally.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drug counts filed against 2

STAFF REPORTS

Two men were charged Monday with drug offenses after West Lafayette police and the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force served a warrant last week at their West Lafayette home.

Yujie Li, 21, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class C felony; dealing in marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

Ali Almelhem, 20, is charged with possession of a controlled substance, a Class D felony; dealing in marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; possession of marijuana, a Class D felony; possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.
Authorities served a warrant April 8 at their home at 1102 Lindberg Road after a seven-month investigation.
Authorities seized marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, drug paraphernalia and $390 in cash from Li and Almelhem's residence.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 counts filed against WL driver who hit woman

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

A West Lafayette woman is suspected of purposely striking another woman with her vehicle last week, pushing the victim into the doorway of an apartment building, according to court documents filed Monday.

Mindy Lee Warthan, 27, has been charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with five felonies and a misdemeanor in the crash that seriously injured Erin M. Hutchins.

Hutchins, 28, of Lafayette is believed to have been dating Warthan's estranged boyfriend. Hutchins was treated at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis for a shattered pelvis, cuts to her lower back, and bloody scrapes to her leg and foot.

She has since been released, a spokeswoman for Clarian Health Partners, which runs Methodist, said Monday.

Lafayette police were called about 6 a.m. April 8 to the 3000 block of Keyes Court, in the Country View Estates apartment complex. Warthan is accused of driving a 1990 Buick Century that left the road and hit Hutchins, who had been outside with her roommate and the roommate's cousin.

Warthan was arrested about 10 minutes later pulling into a residence on Oregon Street. She had her 8-month-old daughter with her at the time.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed Monday with the charges, a neighbor heard and saw the driver of a car scream at Hutchins and toss what appeared to be a bag of clothes. The neighbor then saw the driver back the car up and accelerate forward, striking Hutchins.

Hutchins, who lives at Country View, was pushed into the wall and then thrown into the door of an apartment next to hers. The door was knocked off its door jambs.

Warthan told investigators that she thought she had put her car in reverse and said she tried to stop after realizing the vehicle went forward.

But Officer Mark Roberts, a crash reconstructionist with the Lafayette Police Department, noted that tire marks on the sidewalk and in the grass leading to the building showed characteristics of acceleration.

Warthan was being held late Monday in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a $25,000 surety bond.

She is charged with aggravated battery, a Class B felony; battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; battery resulting in bodily injury, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness, a Class C felony; neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony; and leaving the scene of an accident resulting in seriously bodily injury, a Class A misdemeanor.

April 15, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Police make another arrest in drug investigation

Updated: April 15, 2008 06:59 PM EDT

LAFAYETTE, IND -- Police make another arrest as part of a drug task force investigation.

23-year old Juan Carlos Gonzalez is jailed on six counts, including dealing cocaine and possession of cocaine.

Tippecanoe County prosecutor Pat Harrington says Gonzalez was arrested this afternoon outside his house in Lafayette.

Court records say Gonzalez purchased drugs from a confidential informant at least three times last summer.

Three other suspected drug dealers were arrested yesterday and officers seized five pounds of cocaine from a house in Lafayette.

April 11, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Manslaughter gets boyfriend 60 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Days after Brandi R. Thomas was killed in her apartment, the Lafayette woman's family found a letter she had handwritten to her boyfriend and father of her infant son.

It detailed a relationship that was quickly growing apart.

"I need you right now more than anything. ... I don't know if you love me anymore," Thomas, 34, wrote on Jan. 9, a day before firefighters found her badly burned body. "I'm sad, I'm hurt. Saying goodbye sucks. I'm going to say goodbye now."

Thomas' mother, Brenda Johnson, read the letter Thursday morning during the sentencing hearing of Thomas' estranged boyfriend, Jeremy R. Taylor.

Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Don Johnson sentenced Taylor, 30, to 60 years in prison in connection to the woman's stabbing death. He pleaded guilty in February to voluntary manslaughter, a Class A felony, and arson, a Class B felony.

"I'm very sorry I did this. There's not a day I don't regret it," said Taylor, who glanced up from his chair only briefly to look at Thomas' family.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Thomas' body was found Jan. 10 after Lafayette firefighters responded to a blaze at her upstairs garage apartment at 22051/2 N. 18th St. An autopsy determined she died of multiple sharp force trauma and massive blood loss from her injuries.

She left behind a teenage son, Jordan Thomas, and a now 5-month-old son, Logan, that she had with Taylor.

"Jeremy's bad people," Jordan Thomas said afterward. "Bad people get what they deserve."

Taylor's sentencing hearing was held Thursday at the magistrate's court in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a request made by law enforcement, the judge explained.

Detective Dan Shumaker of the Lafayette Police Department said investigators had received information of threats made against Taylor.

"There's not enough to start a case," Shumaker said. "But we had heard rumors on the streets."

Brenda Johnson -- referring to Taylor's lengthy history of substance abuse -- said she suspects it was someone who knew Taylor through drug use.

"It was no one in my family or her father's family," she said. "He was a drug dealer when they first met. Brandi was trying to get away from all that."

Taylor admitted he had gotten into an argument with Brandi Thomas the night of Jan. 9 and he pushed her down. He was accused of stabbing her and then starting a fire afterward to cover the crime.

Taylor told the judge on Thursday that he suspected Thomas had been seeing someone. He said he had been intoxicated and used cocaine that night.

His plea agreement, reached between Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Taylor's court-appointed attorneys -- public defender Amy Hutchison and deputy public defender Lee Griffith -- came 22 days after Thomas was killed.

"Every time I see him, he tells me he can't believe he did this," Hutchison said. "Jeremy did care about Brandi."

In her letter, Thomas also wrote she sensed Taylor had been cheating and growing distant. Still, she hoped the couple would be able to raise their son together.

Brenda Johnson, after reading the letter, had her own comments to share with Taylor.

"Why did you do that?" she said. "You were not big enough to walk away or call me. I believed in you.

"... At what time -- at what age -- how will I tell Logan what happened to his mother?"

Taylor also pleaded guilty in February to an unrelated charge of armed robbery in connection to a holdup in April 2007 at a Village Pantry store in Lafayette.

He was sentenced Thursday to 50 years for the voluntary manslaughter charge and 10 years for arson, with those sentences to be served at the same time.

He received 10 more years in prison for the robbery, to be served after the other terms.

Taylor cannot appeal his sentence under terms of the plea agreement. He also must pay $7,799 in restitution to the family for funeral costs.

The judge, noting the tension in the magistrate's court, urged the family to let go of any grudges they had.

"No one understands what happened," Don Johnson said.

"I hope people don't act on the threats. No matter the sentence, there's nothing that can bring her back."

April 11, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper

Sex offender gets 7 years, 6 months in prison for groping woman

STAFF REPORTS

A Lafayette man with prior felony convictions for child molesting and failing to register as a sex offender was sentenced today to seven years and six months in prison for groping a woman.

The sentence was the maximum that Chester E. Leloup, 61, could receive under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Leloup pleaded guilty in December to criminal confinement, a Class D felony, and to being a habitual offender.

According to court documents, a woman told Lafayette police that she was walking into Home Hospital on Aug. 3 when a man - claiming to be her brother - attempted to hug and kiss her.

She said the man, later identified as Leloup, also grabbed her breast. The woman was not physically injured.

Police suspected Leloup because of similar complaints against him made outside St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

Leloup was convicted in 1996 of child molesting in Benton County. He was released from prison about a year later.

A six-member Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 jury found him guilty in February 2006 of failing to register as a sex offender.

Deputy prosecutor Laura Zeman said Leloup's sentence handed down today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 will be served after he completes the Superior Court 5 sentence.

April 9, 2008: Journal and Courier Newspaper Editorial

Proactive approach deters crime

Knock on wood, Tippecanoe County hasn't experienced that kind of violence, and Lafayette police generally report crime trended downward between 2006 and 2007. That said, countywide crime figures indicate slight increases in violent crimes and property crimes from 1999 through 2005.

As the county's crime stats ticked up, area police have addressed problems, reporting more arrests for illegal possession of weapons and robbery. But traditionally police work is reactionary, responding after a crime is reported. That's in the process of changing here.

The first step to addressing any problem is identifying what and where specific crimes are occurring, then figuring out what might be the cause. Tippecanoe County already is addressing these issues.

A federal grant provided the county with funds to hire an investigator and purchase computers to track crimes, gang activities and arrests.

Kathy Redd, an investigator in the prosecutor's office, leads this effort, which includes working with rental property owners and crime watch groups to improve safety in the community.

It is refreshing to see residents and property owners working with law enforcement officials to curtail crimes. The proactive eyes and ears of neighborhood crime watch members, coupled with the efforts of rental property owners to landscape their apartments in a way to minimize crime, will send a message to the criminals and gangs that there is no safe haven to practice their trade.

In the meantime, the tracking figures provided by Redd and liaison officers at Lafayette police and the Tippecanoe sheriff's department will beef up patrols in problem areas, sending the message to the nefarious souls to take their enterprises somewhere else -- preferably somewhere outside our county and state.

The collaboration of residents, rental property owners, police and the prosecutor's office obviously won't end crime in Tippecanoe County. But the design of the grant and Redd's efforts will give residents and law enforcement officials the tools needed to make it more difficult for criminals and gang members to operate.

Crime flourishes when people allow it to exist. We applaud Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Redd, the rental property owners and residents for keeping Tippecanoe County safe, and we encourage others to get involved and learn what they might do to discourage crime.

April 7, 2008: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Anti-Crime Initiative Taking Shape

By SOPHIA VORAVONG
svoravong@journalandcourier.com

Since December, Kathy Redd has been meeting with rental property owners and neighborhood associations in Tippecanoe County to learn more about concerns they have regarding safety in the community.

The responses that Redd, an investigator with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, received were almost uniform in each focus group.

"Almost unanimously, they were experiencing struggles with drug dealers living in the area and illegal activity happening on and near their property," she said. "They're frustrated about not being able to do anything about it, about not having the tools to help."

But some help will come soon.

Redd is the local coordinator for Project Safe Neighborhoods, an anti-crime and anti-gang initiative larger cities nationwide have successfully used to combat issues such as drug dealing, weapons offenses, robberies and vandalism.

For months she has been gathering statistics and working on a 267-page manual -- completed last week -- that will be used to help rental property managers. Redd said the first six- to eight-hour training class could begin by late May.

"We're looking forward to kicking out the program and getting the community behind us and engaged," she said. "We want the community to know that they can help make a difference. ... We really want to engage both tenants and landlords to become partners so that they do not have to live around illegal activity."

Last summer, the prosecutor's office received a $52,398 grant for the federal Project Safe Neighborhoods program. So far, it has been used to hire Redd and buy notebook computers so that Pat Harrington's office, Lafayette police, and Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies can track and analyze trouble spots.

Harrington, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor, said the goal is to take a multiprong proactive and reactive approach in crime fighting "before it gets out of hand.

"It's a situation of recognizing the crime -- seeing that there's already been successful programs developed by other cities and bringing it here to Lafayette to implement."

A big part of Project Safe Neighborhoods involves working closely with rental property owners and managers and neighborhood associations, he said.

That's good news to Kyle Gingrich-Fulks, who grew up in the historic Perrin neighborhood just east of Lafayette's downtown and is co-chairwoman of its neighborhood association. An anti-crime committee was established last fall to help deal with issues that include transiency and loitering.

"We just had a meeting ... and talked about what we can do preventatively to tackle crime," she said. "I do think that people are more aware now. They aren't afraid to call police if they see something suspicious.

"It doesn't mean that crime won't happen, but it's a step in the right direction."

The Perrin neighborhood soon plans to put up signs showing that it has an active neighborhood crime watch. Residents also have been encouraged to leave on porch lights to deter criminals.

Gingrich-Fulks said they also plan on approaching city officials about getting additional lighting.

"We have a lot of unity going now," she said.

Part of the training that Redd will provide to landlords includes using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design techniques, which encourages strategies such as making intruders easily observable.

Harrington said the design program would teach property managers other safety tactics: clearing bushes so that they don't cover windows, how to recognize drug labs and encouraging community policing.

Using information obtained from the Lafayette Housing Authority, Redd also compiled a list of rent-subsidized housing units in the Tippecanoe County. What she found is that 24 percent of all rental units in the community are low-income housing.

"The population is denser in those properties than it is for the average rental property in Tippecanoe County," Redd said. "The amount of people we have living in low-income housing is about 14,000. That's pretty substantial.

"It's also spread sporadically, which makes it difficult to manage."

In the Valley Center neighborhood, about 40 percent of all properties are a mix of houses and apartments for rent, said Michael Bittinger, president of its neighborhood association.

Though he said crime is not a huge problem there -- "at least not yet" -- Bittinger and his wife were active in forming the neighborhood association so that they could get to know their neighbors better.

"It's a feeling that I would like to have to be able to call my neighborhood my home," Bittinger said.

A sense of community pride is another goal of Harrington and Redd, who say that strong neighborhoods could drive out criminals.

"To criminals, that's not attractive," Harrington said. "They want to be anonymous."