

# Accused Killer Loses Extradition Battle

By CHANDRA NILES FOLSOM  
Correspondent

More than two years after the murders of a couple during an armed robbery at their Post Road jewelry store in Fairfield, the alleged killer was finally arraigned in a Conn. courtroom. On March 29, the New York state Court of Appeals rejected 23-year-old Christopher DiMeo's bid to halt extradition. He was returned to Conn. on March 30 and held without bond. The suspect had been incarcerated in New York state, where he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life with no possibility of parole for murdering the manager of a Long Island jewelry store. DiMeo could face the death penalty if convicted in Conn.

"Time and the extradition process—which Mr. DiMeo had a right to, may have delayed his official charging," said Fairfield Police Department Capt. Gary MacNamara at a news conference held on March 30. "It has not, should not, and will not minimize the brutal acts he is responsible for."



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**In February 2005 Christopher DiMeo was captured by Atlantic City Police at a motel after a five-hour standoff. Following the arrest, he was held in custody awaiting extradition to Connecticut for over two years.**

On Feb. 2, 2005, Kimberly and Timothy Donnelly, both 52, were shot dead during a robbery at Donnelly Jewelers allegedly by DiMeo, a fugitive on a crime spree that began on the West Coast, four months earlier. When it was all over,

Fairfield police had charged DiMeo with capital felony; two counts of felony murder; two counts of murder; one count of first-degree robbery; and criminal possession of a firearm—crimes he will soon be tried for.

"Fairfield is a fairly residential community of 58,000," said Lt. Chris Lyddy, a 24-year veteran with the Fairfield Police Department who is the investigative supervisor assigned to the Donnelly case. "Fortunately, violent homicides are unusual for us."

DiMeo, a Glen Head, N.Y. native, after serving time for burglary, attempted robbery and drug possession, was able to transfer his parole to Calif. in June 2004 to live with his grandparents in San Marcos. In October 2004, he left Calif. with another 23-year-old parolee, Nicole Pearce—according to police, a known methamphetamine user.

DiMeo stole his grandparents' 1999 Honda Passport, paintings worth \$30,000, silver coins valued at \$500, and forged more than \$3,000 in checks, according to detectives in San Diego, Calif. He and Pearce traveled cross-country, arriving in New York City by the end of October, to meet up with DiMeo's 40-year-old mother, Maryann Taylor-Casey. Soon after police say DiMeo and Pearce

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# Simulator Recreates Life and Death Scenarios

By DAVID SCALES  
Correspondent

*Note: David was invited by the Danbury Police Department to experience part of their training that takes place in a simulator. Here is his account of what happened as he went "on patrol" as a would-be police officer:*

On a sunny morning during a patrol in my police cruiser, I noticed a woman striking her child. When I pulled over to see if the child was hurt, I saw her mother sit on a nearby bench with her purse on her lap and turned my attention back to the girl. That was my first mistake.

My second was not knowing enough Spanish to understand what the girl meant when she said, "Mi madre tiene un arma."

I figured out what that meant when her mother pulled a revolver and fired twice at me. I pulled my .9 mm Glock handgun from its holster and fired three shots. My shaking hand made me miss my first shot.

The second and third shots hit the mother in the stomach and chest. She slumped over dead. Half a heartbeat later, I would have been too.

Fortunately, none of it actually happened -- but in a training simulator used by the Danbury Police Department, officers learn to deal with real-life, real-time situations like this one. According to Sgt. Alan Mattei, the firearms instructor who runs their Firearms Training Simulator (FATS), it's part of the Danbury Police Department's new process of developing a total training concept to enhance an officer's ability to deal with such situations.

The program will feature a training course incorporating the FATS scenarios, as well as other exercises where all equipment and techniques will be used as if the situation were real, so officers can be ready for a dangerous situation like the one I encountered.

The FATS machine projects a series of

*(Continued on page 17)*



**Above are two of the many scenarios that officers in training face in the firearms training simulator (FATS). Below are examples of computerized but realistic feeling firearms that can be used in the simulator. Officers are trained with weapons such as the .9mm Glock handgun as well as non lethal TASER stun guns and pepper spray.**



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# SCAM of the Month:

By GRANT STINCHFIELD  
Correspondent



## New ID Theft Scheme: Stealing IRS Refund Checks

The latest identity theft scheme is even fooling the Internal Revenue Service. Many taxpayers will soon find out their refund has been stolen by identity thieves using the names and social security numbers of their victims to file bogus tax returns in order to steal their victims' refunds.

"I haven't even filed my 2006 taxes yet!" said an outraged Yoki Echols. She is just one of the victims from Connecticut to California caught up in the latest fraud designed to bilk people of their money. "It's been hard trying to get people to understand you are a victim," says Echols. She learned that someone filed a phony tax return using her private and personal information. The crooks then took out a "tax refund anticipation loan" worth \$1900 from a bank out west. "And now the bank is asking me for repayment of that loan -- I don't have that kind of

money, and the worst part is when I file my real tax return, I'll probably owe the IRS money."

The Internal Revenue Service acknowledges tax identity theft is a growing crime that is hard for agents to prevent. "It's an ongoing problem the

IRS sees," warns IRS spokesperson Phil Beasley. "The sad reality is it's difficult to sort it all out and get proof you are who you say you are. Sometimes, it can take years to sort it all out." Which means victims are left trying to prove their innocence.

In Echols' case, the thief claimed on the bogus return that she worked at a company called "Silverleaf Resorts." There is such a company, but Echols has never worked for it. She has worked for her current employer for seven years. She even has a notarized written statement from Silverleaf Resorts that backs her up. However, Echols says after dozens of phone calls and letters, neither the IRS nor the bank seems willing to help her resolve the problem. "It's like they just want the money -- they don't care if it was fraud or not, they just keep telling me I owe it, they want it."

"Oh, no! Not again!" -- That is my first response," says financial counselor Bettye Banks. She coaches people on how to protect their good name from

identity thieves. Despite shredding your personal documents, not carrying around your social security card, and monitoring your credit bureau reports, Banks warns, sometimes thieves get your information anyway. "It's frightening -- in fact, it's petrifying. Moreover, if you fall victim, no one else may care. You are the one who stands to lose, so fight for your good name and don't give up until it's cleared."

The Justice Journal contacted the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service on behalf of Yoki Echols. That agency now vows to take a close look at Echols' case and help her

through the daunting process of clearing her name. The IRS has a Taxpayer Advocate office in Hartford, at 135 High Street. Call (860) 756-4555 in Hartford or the national toll-free number, 1-877-777-4778, for information. This independent service within the IRS is responsible for helping people work through any IRS issue when the taxpayer feels other IRS offices are not being helpful enough. (There is a website with complete details regarding what the TAS is empowered to do: [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1546.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1546.pdf).)

Phil Beasley, the IRS spokesperson in Washington, DC, explains, "The IRS definitely wants to work this out. It affects the taxpayer, but we also have a fraud issue going on here." He says with more and more people falling victim to this type of crime, agents will try to gather enough proof to find out who is responsible, and then seek federal charges.

(Contact Grant at [g.stinchfield@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:g.stinchfield@thejusticejournal.com))

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# Closing the Digital Generation Gap

## Police Teach Children and Parents How to Avoid Internet Dangers

By PAMELA FALCIGNO  
Correspondent



Predatory acts against children are among the most heinous of crimes. The Internet is a means by which a predator can anonymously contact a young person to arrange a rendezvous – which can prove to be a fatal mistake for the youngster.

In 2002, the body of a 13-year-old girl from Danbury was found in Greenwich after she was raped and killed by a man living in Greenwich whom she met via the Internet. “That’s why we want to make sure that kids do not make the same mistakes,” says Officer Christy Girard of the Greenwich Police Department, who speaks to parents and students about Internet safety.

During sessions with the parents, Officer Girard says she has found they fear having much less knowledge about the Internet and computer technology than their kids. “The kids are very computer savvy...You need software to see how the kids are getting around parental controls...We teach parents about the dangers of the Internet and . . . try to take the fear part away.” The Greenwich Police Department’s Internet safety program helps parents learn, in less than two hours, how to access the Internet, view their child’s histories, use software to limit their children’s access, and monitor activities. Youth officers in Greenwich are certified through i-SAFE, a nationally renowned nonprofit educational organization creating awareness of Internet dangers.

Officer Girard notes that by the time children are in middle school, parents become aware of the need to have more

information, but even younger children are starting to have more access to the Internet in the home. “Schools are teaching children at a younger age how to use the Internet -- but they could accidentally bump into pornography or people trying to contact or harass them.”

In a survey from i-SAFE, over 15 percent of fifth graders and 36 percent of tenth graders had visited an “inappropriate” website. Some 93 percent of parents interviewed felt they had set ground rules for their child’s online activities. However, just 64 percent of schoolchildren interviewed said their parents had established rules for Internet use.

As Internet usage becomes even more prevalent among children, “Internet safety is becoming a bigger topic,” says Sgt. Andre Valez of the Norwalk Police Department. Norwalk officers help schoolchildren stay one step ahead of Internet predators and recommend caution when using “blogs” -- online diaries where an individual can post personal information and photos. Sgt. Valez says children have used these sites to “bully, harass, and embarrass” others by altering photos to make them “provocative” and then re-posting them on the Internet. In the high school version of the department’s Internet safety program, he says he shows students examples of censored

photos to create what he calls “shock value” so they can understand the real dangers.

Sgt. Valez discusses bullying and harassment, tells kids what Internet activities are illegal, and advises them to contact a responsible adult or their local police should they encounter such situations. In addition, he makes students aware that the FBI investigates computer crimes, underscoring the seriousness of these activities. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, young people say that bullying is one of the biggest problems they face, and 52 percent of students report seeing bullying at least once a week.

Capt. Stephen Brown of the Ridgefield Police Department says Internet predators can find information through some “real simple methods,” such as

screen names. For example, the screen name “Soccer Girl 14” is most likely a 14-year-old girl who likes soccer, not just some anonymous person. “That begins to open up some eyes. It begins the discussion and drives some points home with the kids.”

Officers advise students to avoid giving out personal information, including the name of their school, and avoid engaging in online discussion with strangers. Instant Messaging and E-mail addresses can be easily transferred, and caution is recommended in their use. “You might think you’re in a chat room with friends, but then someone else gets the address and starts to participate in the discussion,” says Capt. Brown. He adds, “Above all, we advise them to never meet with any strangers they talk to online, because the people may not be who they say they are.”

Students ask what they should do if they receive a threatening or hostile message. “Our advice,” says Capt. Brown, “is to tell their parents, teacher, or any responsible adult and not respond to any inappropriate chat comments or messages.”

(Contact Pamela at  
[p.falcigno@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:p.falcigno@thejusticejournal.com))

### Helpful Tips To Keep You And Your Children SAFE ON THE INTERNET:

Don't give out personal information, including your picture. You do not know who will get this. Always trust your instincts. If you do not feel comfortable giving out information, then don't.

Always check with your parents before sending your picture.

Many sites use passwords. If you have to choose a password, make sure it is one that would be hard for others to guess.

Remember, you cannot see the people you talk to on the Net. They may not always be what they appear. Adults can pretend to be kids. Keep your radar up!

If a friend on the Net wants to meet you, make sure to get your parents' permission. If you decide to meet, have a parent go with you.

Establish ground rules with your parents before going on the Net. Know which sites you can visit and which ones you cannot. Know how long you should spend "surfing" and know what to do if you come across something that bothers you.

Source: [www.sass.ca/safety](http://www.sass.ca/safety)

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# Proposed Legislation Would Raise Prosecution Age to 18

By **TEALE CALIENDO**  
Correspondent

"Minutes go by like hours...hours like days, and days like months. He told me he thought about killing himself several times," Johnna Paradis said. She was recalling her son Christopher's account of his weeks at the Manson Youth Institution in Cheshire. He was there about two-and-a-half weeks, but being confined to a cell for all but one hour a day drove him to consider suicide.

While Christopher did not act on that impulse, 17-year-old David Burgos did. In March 2005, Burgos took the sheets from his bed and hanged himself in his cell.

According to Connecticut's Child Advocate Jeanne Milstein, two things were clear in the Burgos case. First, the young man had serious mental health issues -- he had been diagnosed as bipolar -- and second, the adult facility in Cheshire was not equipped to meet his needs.

Milstein said that Burgos fell through the cracks in Connecticut's penal system that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to be prosecuted as adults, regardless of the seriousness of their crimes. She testified before the legislature about what she says is the unfairness of that situation, explaining,

"Adolescents do not have the decision-making capacity of adults, nor do they have the ability to fully understand the ramifications of their actions."

Milstein notes that adolescent development includes "self-searching,

*"Adolescents do not have the decision-making capacity of adults, nor do they have the ability to fully understand the ramifications of their actions."*

*- Jeanne Milstein, Connecticut Child Advocate*

self-absorption, a need for privacy, mood swings, unique dress, escapism, and engaging in risky behaviors, as the adolescent tries to become an adult...(demonstrating) the period of adolescence is a formative time. In the adult system, we do not offer them age-appropriate rehabilitative services or treatments."

Those are some of the many reasons child advocate organizations are pushing for a new law that will no longer treat youngsters under 18 as adults. New Haven-area lawmakers, State Senate Deputy President Pro Tempore Toni Harp (D-New Haven) and State House Deputy Majority Leader Toni Walker (D-New Haven) are co-sponsoring this year's "Raise the Age" legislation, proposed bill number 6290. They point out that Connecticut is

"locking up more children in adult prisons than any other state...(as) one of only three states to punish all 16- and 17-year-olds -- even those accused of the most minor and nonviolent offenses -- as adults." The other

two states the legislators referred to are New York and North Carolina.

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA), based in Bridgeport, also has been in the "Raise the Age" campaign since 2001. CTJJA was created out of a group of child advocate organizations to serve youngsters caught up in the state's juvenile justice system.

"This (issue) was on our radar, and we realized there was a need to focus on it," said CTJJA's Senior Policy Associate Abby Anderson. "It's a 'no-brainer' -- after all, children aren't considered adults until 18, but when it comes to the state's legal system, no child after 16 can be treated as a juvenile. In the juvenile justice system there is a lot to prevent kids from going back to crime, and that's why we are looking to raise the age...What we are really doing is changing the default system, because right now you automatically go to the adult system."

Connecticut's current law does not mean you will find a 16-year-old incarcerated with a 55-year-old. Those under 18 go to a facility, such as Manson in Cheshire, that houses young adults up to the age of 21. However, it is an adult facility, and the guards and the staff are not trained to deal with adolescents.

According to the CTJJA, many of the young inmates incarcerated in adult facilities are victims of abuse and neglect, and they do not belong in jail with hardened criminals. The juvenile justice system is actually based on the notion that children are different from adults, and because they are not yet fully developed, they are still capable of rehabilitation.

"These youngsters (in adult facilities) are not eligible for the same kinds of services such as therapy, diversion, or alternatives to incarceration that are available to young people in the juvenile justice system," Anderson added.

Chief State's Attorney Kevin T. Kane, in a recent interview, said the issue is not as simple and clear-cut as some think. "(We are) not opposed to the concept, (but) it must be effective...The biggest question is, 'Have the costs been determined, and will the funding be provided so the facilities and abilities to deal with it will be in place?'"

Kane cited Connecticut's youthful offender (YO) provision that works to the advantage of youngsters aged 16 and 17, caught between juvenile and adult status. YO allows for lower sentencing guidelines for youths and the expunging of a minor's record. It can be applied depending upon the seriousness of a crime.

However, "Raise the Age" advocates say because the entire process still occurs within an adult system, even a lesser sentence means a youngster will wind up doing time in an adult facility. That is what happened to Christopher following a street fight in which he was involved.

Christopher's mother insists he was no more culpable than the other participant, but he wound up in Manson since he was already on probation. Ironically, Christopher was only on the authorities' radar screen because his mother had put him there to help him. "He was up all night riding his bike; he'd sleep all day. I asked police if there were services and was told to get him into the system...have him arrested, and get him a probation officer. I put him in the system, and I made a big mistake," she said.

When Paradis picked up Christopher after his time at Manson, she was shocked at what she saw. "He was as white as a shirt...You could see he did not see the light of day...(he was like) a concentration camp -- a POW -- victim. He was withdrawn." She added that Christopher still is not comfortable talking about the experience.

That's when Paradis added her voice to the "Raise the Age" movement as a family advocate, urging rehabilitation rather than punishment for children in crisis. "The children need transition services, and so do the parents."

"Raise the Age" advocates agree with the chief state's attorney that putting the law in place will cost money because of an increase in juvenile case-loads and the necessary expansion of staff and facilities. They say, however, the cost would be more than offset by long-range savings that would come about as juveniles' lives are turned around and crime is reduced. In addition, they note it has been estimated that it costs nearly \$50,000 annually to house a juvenile. Child advocates contend such money would be better utilized to provide programs that will keep youngsters out of jail in the first place.

The proposed law would not go into effect until July 2009. The two-year implementation is designed to enable services and appropriate programs aimed at the 16- and 17-year-olds to be put in place. To track the status of the legislation, go to [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov) and search Bill #6290.

(Contact Teale at [t.caliendo@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:t.caliendo@thejusticejournal.com))



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# Violent Criminals: Profiles and Prevention

By **CHANDRA NILES FOLSOM**  
Correspondent

The merciless mugging of a 101-year-old woman in New York City by a violent criminal recently made headlines across the nation, highlighting the potential vulnerability of the elderly. That case had some similarities to the 2005 murder of a 75-year-old Connecticut woman whose killer has finally been tried and convicted.

Harry Gonzalez was an ex-con with a long rap sheet when he was released from prison in July 2005. Short on cash, Gonzalez had been living in a car with girlfriend Jennifer Kos, when he came up with a plan to rob a retired schoolteacher in Stamford.

Gonzalez had met Joanne Trautwein, 75, in 2002 when he serviced her car at the Stamford gasoline station where he worked as a mechanic.

Kos testified against Gonzalez in court that the couple had stopped by Trautwein's home on October 6, 2005, at about 3 p.m., but discovered she was out. They hung around and spoke with a neighbor for a while before driving to a local sports bar for supper. They returned to Trautwein's home at 7 p.m. Kos said Gonzalez grabbed the woman in the kitchen, hog-tied her with a phone cord, and slashed her throat with a carving



**Dr. James J. Monahan**

knife. During the attack, Kos restrained another woman, Trautwein's best friend of 50 years, with whom Trautwein shared the home.

It took 12 jurors less than a day to reach a verdict. Gonzalez was found guilty of felony murder, kidnapping, and robbery. He was awaiting sentencing this month. In exchange for her testimony, Kos was able to plead guilty to robbery and receive a reduced prison sentence of 10 years.

The case of the Trautwein murder illustrates the possible mindsets of "vio-

lent offenders" as well as what can be done to protect the elderly from such criminals.

"Mr. Gonzalez had worked on her car and believed her to be wealthy," said Lt. Sean Cooney, public information officer with the Stamford Police Department. "He knew she lived in a quiet neighborhood where he might come and go unnoticed. He knew she was female and a senior, less capable of physical self-defense and therefore perhaps more susceptible to coercion or intimidation. These factors likely entered into Gonzalez's calculations when thinking about where he could get some easy cash."

Psychologists study other factors involved in the making of a violent criminal such as Harry Gonzalez. "If he's not a psychopath, he has a severe character disorder associated with antisocial behavior," said Dr. James J. Monahan, an associate professor of criminal justice at the University of New Haven, who works closely with the New Haven Police Department. "He does not feel guilt or empathy and doesn't sense that others have feeling or pain. He probably was high, broke in, and either panicked or became enraged because of something the victim said or did. In any case, this man is not safe to be out on the streets."

Is there a specific type of person police search for in these instances?

"This sort of person is almost certainly male, in his mid to late 20s or early 30s, and usually goes after someone of the same race," said Dr. Monahan, who chairs the Board of Examiners in Psychology for Connecticut. He also teaches crisis intervention training to police SWAT teams. "This person most likely has a history of violence and assault, a few scars from fights, and has been doing drugs since adolescence. I would advise police to go to local prisons and ask for a list of those let go in the past six months to a year."

Is it nature or nurture that creates a violent criminal?

"Violent street crime tends to come from a society of underclass — both white and minority but from impoverished backgrounds, with chronic school failure, social isolation, and difficulty with intimacy," said Dr. Monahan. "Women are just sex objects to these types, and they give police the jitters because they are violent and unpredictable. Also they are often on drugs and will do anything to get money—not stopping at murder."

Can violent criminals be rehabilitated?

"There are ex-cons who eventually straighten out, yet cases like this in the media lead the public to believe other-

*(Continued on page 15)*



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## **Connecticut Police Chiefs Association Coaching for Life**

The Board of Directors of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association has recently endorsed the Coaching for Life program, incorporating the approach within their Police Department PAL programs. Joe Ehrmann, former NFL lineman, is Founding Director.

The goal of the program is to develop a strong network of coaches, teachers, police officers, parks and recreation directors to oversee sports activities at the elementary, junior and high school levels; targeting, in particular, those communities which have significant numbers of children who are at-risk for juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and school failure.

The aim of the program is to provide a model of athletics and character development that is systemic - providing the same sets of positive messages for children in community leagues up through and including varsity athletics.

Work has begun in the cities of Waterbury, New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport and expected to be expanded next year. For more information, contact Sherry Haller, Executive Director, The Justice Education Center, Inc. at 860 231 8180.

[www.epcanet.org](http://www.epcanet.org)

# Amber Alert ID Card Helps Protect Connecticut Children

By LEISA TAYLOR  
Correspondent

Some 400 children are hopefully safer today after recently being registered with the Amber Alert Child ID Program.

The ID registration, administered by the Danbury Rotary Club and The Woman's Club of Danbury/New Fairfield, took place during Children's Day at Danbury Hospital. Andrea Lynn, the hospital's community relations manager, said, "It's all about keeping children healthy, safe, and active," she said.

The Amber Alert Child ID Program helps keep children safe. "If we can prevent one child from going missing, or get one child back without being harmed, it's all worth it," said Bob Vetter, chairman of the Danbury Rotary Amber Alert program. "It's a shame, but it's the way we live today. Kidnapping can happen anywhere."

A companion program of the Amber Alert System, which tries to quickly locate abducted children, the Amber Alert Child ID Program partners the media and local law enforcement in an early warning system to find missing or abducted children. The program provides parents and/or guardians with a wallet-sized, laminated card which provides critical yet minimal information about the child.

The front of the card displays a photo of the child, along with a unique ID number. The back of the card contains essential personal information about the child, such as birth date, height, weight, and hair color. This information is stored in the secured National Amber Alert database, which is available to only a few individuals who are authorized to activate an Amber Alert.

"There is no name or address on the card by which someone can identify or locate the child," said Vetter. "The card only has minimal information, so there's no downside to carrying the card." If a child is abducted, the unique ID number is used by law enforcement personnel to



Many families line up during Children's Day at Danbury Hospital to have their children registered with the Amber Alert Child ID Program. More than 400 children were photographed and issued identification cards.

extract the information from the database for help in identifying and locating the child.

Literature about Amber Alert states that the ID program is specifically designed to address those critical first three hours. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 74 percent of children abducted and later found murdered were killed within three hours of being taken.

"The majority of children are either killed or molested in the first three hours," Vetter confirmed. "Last year in this area, someone stopped a kid and tried to get him in the car. The child was fortunately able to get away, but something like this can happen anywhere. Hopefully, this program might even deter something from happening in the first place."

The Danbury Rotary Club has four computer sets for registering children in the program. For the Children's Day at the hospital, the club borrowed a fifth

machine in order to process the large volume of children expected.

"It costs about \$6,600 per set," said Vetter, "so the Rotary Club has about \$35,000 in equipment for the ID program. We took money out of a trust in order to purchase the equipment, and we're using sponsorships to pay it back."

The Woman's Club of Danbury/New Fairfield cosponsored the registration of children, and both Sheila Vetter, Bob's wife and the president of the Woman's Club, and their daughter, Suzanne, participated in the event. Many of the club's members were also on hand to help.

Member Marie Kornhaas from Danbury brought her two grandchildren and one of their friends to be registered. "It's a wonderful, wonderful program... Every child should be registered. You never know - it could be the person next door that abducts a child."

A brother and sister in the area had their respective children re-registered in

the ID program. Laurie Carney of Danbury brought her seven-year-old, who was first registered in June 2006. "It's great to have an updated photo with the child's height and weight," said Carney, who added that she has advised her child what to do in an emergency situation. "I've told her that if anyone tries to take her, she has permission to kick, scream, and fight - anything to try and get away. It's the only situation in which I've said she's allowed to fight."

Carney's brother, Joe Sauer of Brookfield, also brought his seven-year-old child to update her information and photo. "In a crisis situation, it's good to have all the information at your fingertips," said Sauer. "I've told my child that if she's approached by a stranger, never assume that it's okay." Sauer said that kidnapping is always at the back of his mind. "It's sad, but true. My wife and I never let her out of our sight in a public situation."

(Continued on page 14)



## Letters to the Editor

### Beauty Fights the Beast

Congratulations to Miss Connecticut for using her crown to do something constructive for society. So often beauty queens promise they will work for the betterment of humankind, only to either fade into obscurity (or tabloid notoriety) or spin their 15-minutes of fame into a show biz career. Heidi Voight has applied her personal pain to her star power and created a platform to give a voice to women who for so long have been silenced.

Hillary Chase  
Westport, CT

### Senator Wants Dialogue

March 29, 2007

To the Editor:

I have followed your paper since the Preview edition in October and appreciate what you are trying to accomplish.

Whether you're a student, a parent, a local official, or an elected legislator, hearing different perspectives on issues of importance offers a chance to see a different side, to gain a different insight, and to learn from people who have views that differ from the mainstream. Since the emergence of the Internet and electronic communications, differing views have become more available and accessible. There's something to be said, however,

for print media, which is why I so enjoy reading The Justice Journal. The Journal offers a refreshing new point of view on important topics, including law enforcement and public security, and brings these issues to the forefront.

As a legislator, I'm always working to start a productive dialogue, and I get the greatest return when the public engages in dialogues with me. With the goal of increasing public involvement, The Justice Journal too strives to involve citizens in these important policy discussions. That's something we need much more of in Connecticut.

Senator Bob Duff  
(D-Norwalk)

Bob Duff represents Connecticut's 25th Senatorial District towns of Norwalk and Darien.

## Editorial Policy:

The Justice Journal encourages original letters to the editor pertaining to subjects and issues raised by the writers.

We reserve the right to publish or edit letters for taste, length and clarity. Make sure to include your full name, address and a daytime telephone number so that we can verify who you are. All letters through the mail must be typed and should not exceed 250 words in length. Anonymous letters will not be published.

Please send your letters to:

The Justice Journal Editor  
21 Charles Street, Suite 114  
Westport, CT 06880  
Or e-mail:  
Editor@thejusticejournal.com

## Notes from the Editor's Desk:



### 'Loss' of a Reporter Reminds Us of Risks Faced by Law Enforcement Personnel

The Justice Journal "lost" a reporter recently as he went through part of a police training exercise using a video simulator. As David Scales writes in this issue, "...her mother pulled a revolver and fired twice at me. I pulled my .9 mm Glock handgun from its holster and fired three shots. My shaking hand made me miss my first shot. The second and third shots hit the mother in the stomach and chest. She slumped over dead. Half a heartbeat later, I would have been, too."

David's experience is one that would help anyone better understand what kind of split-second decisions in all sorts of circumstances law enforcement personnel are expected to make - and with consideration for a virtually unlimited list of potential ramifications. To some extent, it's a bit like driver education, where we are expected to learn how to make split-second decisions that could save our lives or prevent others from losing theirs.

When someone in law enforcement goes strictly "by the book" in making a split-second, life-or-death decision, there still could be severe repercussions even if there were no basis for any disciplinary action. Civil suits, psychological damage, and public distrust are just a few of the possible aftershocks, even when the law-enforcement agency involved investigates and finds no criminal wrongdoing by an officer or agent.

I know a former police officer who had told her parents early in her career, "I love you and I thank you for all you have done for me. I also want you to know that if I die tomorrow because of my job, it would be worth it." She then explained that she had learned many police officers who have died in the line of duty never had taken the opportunity to say something like that to their loved ones. She had been advised to do it right away, just in case...

When I hear of a law-enforcement person sacrificing his or her life in the line of duty, as we hear all too often, I always hope that person did take the time to tell his or her loved ones what they needed to hear, and remember, in the event of sudden, duty-related death.

Kenn Venit  
Managing Editor

## Letter from the Publisher:

### Parental Responsibility



Thanks to all of you who take time to write to us. Your input is valuable and often influences assignments to reporters. One of the many communications we received last month was an anonymous e-mail about child abuse.

I've found that people who write anonymously do not wish to be recognized publicly because they are usually offering extreme or bizarre viewpoints. Our policy is to not publish unidentified messages of any type, and a quick review of this one revealed some outlandish opinions, so it was filed away.

However, as we were closing this edition, I came across the letter again. The opening line read, "Child abuse is parental neglect. You eliminate parental neglect and you eliminate child abuse... It is that simple..." Well, it's not really that simple, but ironically that statement is absolutely correct! I wonder how many crimes committed against our kids, or even by our kids, could be prevented if we parents had the courage to actually provide them with a little discipline, a lot of quality time, and a positive role model.

Parental neglect is not something that happens only in disadvantaged families or in poor communities—it happens in the most privileged and affluent communities, as well. Neglect can have many forms. It's not just because we are too busy, and it's not that we are indifferent, but mostly it's because we are afraid to enforce what we know deep down is the right thing to do. We struggle to identify where to draw the line between the freedom to develop independence and the restrictions needed to keep our kids on the responsible path to adulthood. Many of us are in a state of denial, not wanting to look too closely at what our kids are doing for fear we might see something we won't like or know how to deal with.

It's definitely tough to be a parent these days, because it's a different and more dangerous world than we knew. Kids today grow up very fast—when my boys were about eight and 10, I began to realize they knew things I didn't know until I was 25.

It's not acceptable today that we as parents often just close our eyes and hope for the best. Our paper has been encouraging you to get involved in your communities. Maybe we should begin by taking a few small steps with our own families.

Sincerely,  
Doug Johnston

## Submit Articles:

The Justice Journal will consider story ideas or the submission of manuscripts from qualified writers. Contact the editor for requirements.

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Or e-mail: Editor@thejusticejournal.com

## THE JUSTICE JOURNAL

FIGHTING CRIME IN CONNECTICUT

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## Meet the Writers:



GRANT STINCHFIELD is an investigative reporter for an NBC-owned TV station and has been a contributor to MSNBC. Among his special areas of reporting are consumer fraud (especially identity theft) and unsolved murders. He has won four Emmy awards and has had 16 nominations. Other honors include Mothers Against Drunk Driving Journalist of the Year, Associated Press Investigative Reporting Award, Connecticut Safe Kids Achievement Award, and the International Association of Firefighters Achievement Award.



TEALE CALIENDO was an educator who changed careers to become a reporter. She has been in Connecticut journalism for more than two decades. After a distinguished career in radio news in Connecticut, she joined WFSB-TV Channel 3 and became Shoreline Bureau Chief. After years as a corporate communications executive, Teale founded a communications consultation company, which she continues to head, while also continuing writing as a free-lance reporter. Teale is a licensed justice of the peace, and among other responsibilities, enjoys performing marriage ceremonies.



DAWN A. MICELI has worked for various newspapers and other publications throughout Connecticut for a decade and a half. She served as managing editor of an award-winning newspaper, responsible for the layout and editorial content of the 65-page weekly publication, and now is on the staff of an alumni magazine for a Connecticut school. Dawn is an adjunct associate professor of journalism at Quinnipiac University, teaching courses focusing on writing and reporting. Dawn also appears live on WTIC-TV FOX61 hosting Connecticut Lottery Corporation's mid-day drawings.



PAMELA FALCIGNO is a freelance journalist who specializes in stories about law enforcement. Among her assignments has been covering the National Association of Fugitive Investigators Conference in New Orleans, where she interviewed people associated with producing the FOX TV program, America's Most Wanted. Pamela is involved with public affairs programming on two local public access television channels, one on a Charter Cable system, the other on a Comcast Cable system. She earned her bachelor's degree at Albertus Magnus College, majoring in communications/political science.



DAVID SCALES is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in a variety of newspapers and magazines across Connecticut. He earned his master's degree in journalism as well as his bachelor's degree in mass communications at Quinnipiac University. He is a contributor to the book, Helping Your Children Cope with Your Cancer: A Guide for Parents and Families. David's hobbies include writing fiction and SCUBA diving.



CHANDRA NILES FOLSOM is a freelance journalist who writes for newspapers and magazines nationwide. She co-authored Womens Glasnost, with Tatyana Mamonova, in 1994 and served as an editor on The Terrorist Conjunction, by Dr. Alfred Gerteiny, soon to be published by Praeger Security International. Her screenplay American Jihad is currently in post production.



CINDY SIMONEAU a freelance writer, formerly was assistant managing editor, section editor, and bureau chief for the Connecticut Post. She is consulting editor for a major daily newspaper, and adjunct professor of journalism and English at four universities in Connecticut. Cindy is a past president of the Connecticut Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and is currently the treasurer.



MEG BARONE is a general assignment, freelance journalist who has worked for numerous news organizations, including the Associated Press and the Connecticut Post. Her articles have appeared in nearly 40 news publications throughout the country and she has won several awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. Since 2003, Meg has served as a judge for a statewide essay contest sponsored by the School for Ethical Education. She earned a degree in liberal studies from Southern Connecticut State University. In her spare time, Meg is an artist whose eggshell mosaics have been displayed at the White House three times.



LEISA TAYLOR received a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin, with an undergraduate degree in journalism. She practiced law for ten years in Texas before moving to Trumbull in 2000. Prior to her legal career, she was a reporter and editor for a small-town newspaper in Texas. Leisa is the author of The God of Human Blood, a look at murder in biblical times. She is currently a videographer for Channel 17, Trumbull's public educational access channel.

# Fear of Retribution Blocks Arrest in Decade Old Murder Case

By **DAWN A. MICELI**  
Correspondent

Rhonda Johnson could not have known the violent intent of the person she allowed into her car on a September afternoon over a decade ago. That is especially true, her mother says, given that Rhonda's six-month-old son, Co'ran, was strapped in his car seat in the back of that vehicle. But what does seem certain is that fear of that same person who entered her car is paralyzing others from coming forward with sought-after information police need to make an arrest in the particularly brutal killing of a teenaged mother and her infant son.

"Some are afraid to come forward because of fear of retribution, without a doubt," said Stamford Police Lt. John Forlivio. "And that's part of our problem in this case. I understand that some of them are in fear of certain individuals."

The double-homicide Johnson case remains open, the details of the heinous crime spelled out in several extensive three-ring binders shelved in the Stamford Police Department's Bureau of Criminal Investigation. For Rhonda's family, those same details are catalogued on a visceral level – never to be forgotten, yet pushed aside just enough to allow the happier memories to seep in.

"I try to remember all the good times," said Blanche Johnson, Rhonda's mother. "I do my flowers at the cemetery when the weather is good, and I cope."

Life was good for the Johnsons in the days and months leading up to September 12, 1996. Rhonda was a senior in high school with lots of friends and a boyfriend she loved. She became pregnant that year but managed to return to school after Co'ran's birth in March and graduate with her class from Westhill High School. She even attended her prom.

Rhonda enrolled in college, taking a full course load at Norwalk Community Technical College, where she planned to major in mass communications. She also began work as a dietary aide at Stamford Hospital, where her mother was employed in another department. They worked different shifts, allowing them to share transportation via Blanche's Toyota Camry. Between family members and a nearby babysitter, Co'ran was loved and well cared for.

However, Co'ran was not the son of the boy Rhonda had been dating in high school. Unbeknownst to Blanche, Rhonda had had a tryst one night with an old friend – someone from the neighborhood. Blood tests later revealed Andre Messam to be Co'ran's father.

"Rhonda wanted the baby to grow up and know his dad, but they weren't going together, and he didn't come around a lot. He would give her money for the babysitter," Blanche explained.

Messam, 30, of Bridgeport, is serving jail time on a narcotics possession charge at Bergin Correctional Center in Storrs, a

level-2 minimum-security facility. He was sentenced to three years in October 2006 as a result of police stopping him in July 2004 and discovering a small amount of cocaine in his possession. He had previously served jail time after being convicted in 1998 on drug charges, breach of peace, interfering with an officer, and third-

meeting until the next day, September 12. Rhonda obliged, but according to Blanche, "Tomorrow never came."

The next morning, a Thursday, both Rhonda and Blanche woke at the regular time, with Blanche announcing that she was planning to take the day off because of some problems she was having at work. If

her anxiety.

Another friend later found her on that walk and confirmed that her daughter and grandson were dead. Later, Blanche would learn the complete horror of those deaths. Far from a feared car accident, Rhonda and Co'ran had been murdered by multiple gunshots, several of which were to the head, as they sat in their parked car on the side of Grenhart Road.

"It's a likely scenario that the killer was in the vehicle," said Lt. Forlivio. "And yes, there was thought put into it. Some planning went into this."

Blanche says, to her, it is not hard to figure out who killed her daughter and grandson because of the circumstances surrounding Rhonda's last days and the route she traveled on the day of the murder. She maintains that the police, as well, know the identity of the killer. It continues to baffle her that no arrest has been made after all these years, given the investigation that ensued in the days and weeks following the almost unimaginable executions of her daughter and grandson.

"Police said they thought they had enough evidence to convict, but the state's attorney felt that the evidence wasn't enough...I think their (police) hands are tied, and I think they know who did this, and I know who did this," said Blanche.

According to Lt. Forlivio, the case is "still missing a little something...We tried to re-interview witnesses or persons of interest as recently as last year." Despite that effort and a seeming breakthrough in October 2001, when now-retired Stamford Police Capt. Frank Lagan contacted the FBI for assistance in reexamining the physical evidence retrieved from the crime scene, the case remains at an impasse. "The forensic evidence was analyzed at the FBI's lab in Virginia...The results were that we came up with no evidence to link a suspect with the crime. There was no match," Lt. Livio explained. Even a state-funded \$50,000 reward has failed to lure witnesses.

Lt. Forlivio declined comment on whether the murder weapon was ever recovered, but reports have linked Kenneth Brickhouse, also a Stamford resident, to the gun used in the Johnson murders – an allegation that has yet to be confirmed by police. Brickhouse allegedly told prosecutors that he may have supplied that gun. Brickhouse is serving 17 years in McKean Federal Prison in Bradford, Pennsylvania, on drug-trafficking and firearms charges. He is due to be released in 2014.

Brickhouse has a posting on a website that is a pen-pal service for inmates, featuring their photographs and requests for female correspondents. "I'm a regular type of guy that has made some mistakes," he notes on the site.

Lt. Forlivio confirmed that Messam and Brickhouse were "associates." He said, "That individual's name comes up in this investigation, and he's been a

(Continued on page 19)



**Co'ran Johnson**



**Rhonda Johnson**

degree assault and threatening.

Messam was -- and continues to be -- a "person of interest" for police in the Johnson case. In fact, Messam reportedly complained of being railroaded by police and prosecutors during his 2006 hearing because of his suspected involvement in the unsolved murders of Rhonda and Co'ran. He told the judge in the case that police were "playing hardball" and challenged police to "arrest me for it" -- referring to the Johnson homicides -- during his sentencing.

"There's no question that some of the persons of interest have criminal records and some are incarcerated as we speak," said Lt. Forlivio. He noted that Messam was questioned in the Johnson shootings "because of the scenario and the motive of the case."

On September 11, 1996, Rhonda Johnson had plans to meet the father of her baby to pick up the babysitting money she often collected from him – a sticking point between the two, according to Blanche. "He didn't want to pay anything more for the baby, and he didn't want his girlfriend or family to know about him...Rhonda kept saying to me, 'Promise me, Mom, that you won't say anything.' They weren't going to tell his family until his birthday on September 15." That initial phone call was on Wednesday, but Rhonda received a follow-up call asking her to postpone the

she did that, Co'ran would not need to go to the babysitter's home that day. However, Rhonda reminded her mother that missing work might not be the best idea, and Blanche acquiesced and got ready for the office. Blanche recalled, "I said, 'I'll see ya later,' and I kissed her goodbye and the baby goodbye and I went to work."

The plan was for the two to rendezvous at 4 p.m., the time Blanche finished work and Rhonda started her shift. By 4:15, Blanche knew something had happened to her daughter and feared she might have had an accident en route to the hospital. Blanche ultimately had a family member pick her up and drive her home. Blanche said she began to panic and started her own search to locate her daughter.

Friends confirmed that they had seen Rhonda earlier, and the babysitter informed Blanche that Rhonda had indeed picked up Co'ran before 3 p.m. as scheduled. "I ended up going back home because I wanted to be there if she called. My stomach was in butterflies, and I really thought maybe they'd been in a bad accident," Blanche said, noting the time to be between 7:00 and 7:30 p.m., with dusk setting in.

A phone call from a friend's mother, asking what her license plate number was, left Blanche distraught. A groan on the other end of the connection compelled Blanche out of the house to try to walk off



## Accused Killer—

(Continued from page 1)

began committing home burglaries in the tri-state area. During one burglary in Greenwich, Pearce boosted a .40-caliber Heckler and Koch handgun, which police say was used in subsequent robberies.

As November ended, the couple realized home burglaries alone weren't bringing in enough cash to support their drug habits and determined that mom-and-pop jewelry stores would make better targets. According to Nassau detectives, their first known jewelry store heist was on Dec. 5, at Robert's Jewelers in Westbury, N.Y., where DiMeo tried out what became his M.O. —chatting-up clerks before sticking them up.

A couple of weeks later, they hit J&J Jewels in Glen Head, N.Y., where police believe the manager, 48-year-old Thomas Renison, may have resisted before being shot dead by DiMeo. On Jan. 26, 2005, the Rockland Jewelry Exchange in Nanuet, N.Y. was robbed by DiMeo. According to police, his mother drove the getaway car.

Then, on Feb. 2, shortly before closing, the Donnelly Jewelers robbery and murders marked the end of the couple's crime spree.

Court records report that a witness, who worked in an upstairs office, heard the struggle and ventured below to peer through the store's front window. Inside, DiMeo motioned to him that everything was fine, but after the robber left the store, the witness entered to find the couple shot. Timothy was pronounced dead at the scene and Kimberly died a short time later at Bridgeport Hospital.

DiMeo and Pearce escaped from Conn. and ditched the car in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, where police recovered it and the stolen handgun. Investigators later found a sketch Pearce drew of the Donnelly's store.

"It's hard to know for sure what criteria was used in the selection of the Donnelly's jewelry store," said Lt. Lyddy. "We do know that a significant amount of surveillance was done including sketches of the layout of the stores. Hard security measures such as overt security cameras are certainly helpful."

Police say a total of \$380,000 in jewelry was stolen in the four robberies, but the couple's days on the run were soon to

come to an abrupt end. After hearing of the murders, detectives in Nassau County immediately recognized similarities in



Fairfield Police investigate the Donnelly Jewelry Store after the owners, Kimberly and Timothy Donnelly, were shot dead during a robbery in February 2005.

that robbery and in a string of N.Y. jewelry store robberies. Nassau County and Clarkstown, N.Y. detectives traveled to Fairfield and met with local detectives to share information, before naming DiMeo the prime suspect. Police released a photo of DiMeo and a nationwide search began.

Ballistics tests confirmed the bullets used to kill Renison were from the same gun used to kill the Donnellys —the one stolen from the Greenwich home, several months earlier.

Just two days after the final robbery, dozens of armed police officers swarmed the \$39-a-night motel, in Atlantic City, N.J., where the pair was hiding out. Following a five-hour stand off DiMeo was arrested.

According to court records, DiMeo had asked the judge in N.J., "I'll waive extradition, but if I waive extradition my question to the court is, will I be going to Conn. or N.Y.?" The judge told him it would be N.Y. DiMeo waived extradition rights and was transferred to N.Y. where he was initially held for violating his parole.

Pearce, who was arrested by police at the motel front desk before the stand off began, was also transferred to N.Y. Police said both DiMeo and Pearce were taken to Nassau University Medical Center to be treated for drug withdrawal

"From a law enforcement perspective, the highlight of this investigation was the tremendous level of communication that occurred between a multitude of agencies," said Lt. Lyddy. "During the first

shalls and other federal agencies entered the case. During the next 48 hours, we were in constant communication with each other which lead to a successful apprehension with the help of the Atlantic City Police Department."

Pearce was charged in N.Y. with two counts of felony murder and conspiracy to commit first-degree robbery. She received a 20-year sentence. Pearce is currently being held at the Niantic State Department of Corrections facility in Conn., although her case here has not yet been adjudicated.

"Extradition of Pearce was accomplished in a fairly timely manner and presented no problems," said Lt. Lyddy. "But DiMeo appealed each decision. We held an active arrest warrant for him and the state had been seeking extradition. All the appeals took place in the N.Y. court system, but we believed he was near the end of the process and once all appeals were exhausted, he would be returned to Conn."

Taylor-Casey was arrested after being taken from her Hicksville, N.Y. home for questioning.

"DiMeo's mother was charged with crimes related to the N.Y. robbery and homicide," said Lt. Lyddy. "Our investigation revealed that she did not participate in the Fairfield crime. We have no intentions of charging her."

(Contact Chandra at [c.nilesfolsom@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:c.nilesfolsom@thejusticejournal.com))

hour, we had no witnesses and no idea who committed this terrible crime. We quickly reached out to other agencies asking for assistance. Within three hours, investigators from Nassau County Police and Clarkstown Police were in Fairfield. They had similar crimes in their jurisdictions. Quickly, we shared information and were able to develop a possible suspect. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. Mar-

## Connecticut Jewelers Association Recommendations for Crime Prevention

- Do not open or close the store alone. One person should lock or unlock the doors, while a second person observes from a safe distance outside with a cellular phone, in order to summon the police if required.

- Never let a stranger into your place of business before or after business hours.

- Check carefully the identity of all delivery personnel and other workers.

- Use a buzzer system to admit customers to your store. If you feel that locked doors are not appropriate in your community, use a doorbell or chime to alert you that someone has entered your store.

- Have at least two employees on the floor at all times. The chance of armed robbery goes up if there is only one person on the floor.

- Look at and greet all customers who enter your store. Criminals casing your store don't like to be noticed.

- Use and properly maintain a visible video camera and recording system in your store. An obvious camera system acts as a deterrent to crime, and helps identify criminals who commit a crime, or even who case your store with the intention of committing a future crime. If you have a second, concealed recorder in your store, you will still have visual evidence of the criminals even if they take the tape from the main recorder

after a crime.

- Use display cases that have burglary-resistant or reinforced glass on the sides as well as the top. This will further slow down the robber who is smashing cases. It is recommended that at least those showcases containing high-end goods be constructed of special glass. Many robbers have wound up with a small "take" as a result of showcases made of hardened glass that took them many blows and a great deal of time to break.

- Have a highly visible one-way mirror installed on your premises so that potential robbers may think that someone is watching them from the other side. Robbers are deterred by their fear of the "unknown," that is, someone watching them from the other side of the mirror, and by fear of what the unknown person might do.

- Have an "alert system" in place for your store. If you believe you have suspicious persons in your store, have a code word or phrase to alert the other employees in your store that you believe a crime may be about to occur. A phrase such as, "Did Mr. Smith's ring come in today?" will be effective in alerting the staff and will not disturb genuine customers. Employees should pass along the code word to their fellow employees until the entire staff is on notice of a suspicious situation.

(Courtesy: [www.CTJewelers.org](http://www.CTJewelers.org))

## AAA CT MOTOR CLUB FACTOIDS:

CT AAA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)



**PREVENT BACKOVER** - always assume children could be present and carefully check the street, driveway, and area around your vehicle before backing out.

**MORE THAN 300,000** teens are injured in car crashes each year.

**TEENS ARE INVOLVED** in nearly 8,000 fatal crashes each year and more than 3,500 are killed.



## Hector Glynn

Executive Director, CT Juvenile Justice Alliance

# VER

## At What Age Should Juveniles be Treated as Adults? Connecticut Legislature Considers Treating 16- and 17-Year-Olds as Adults

We all have a right to live, work, and raise our children in a safe community. That is one of the reasons why so many people across Connecticut are supporting the "Raise the Age" campaign to return nonviolent minors to the juvenile justice system. Connecticut is one of only three states in the nation that treats all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. The rationale for this policy is that it will deter crime. I have yet, however, to see anyone present a shred of evidence that it does. In reality, "adultification" encourages crime.

Northeastern University Researcher Donna Bishop studied juveniles transferred to adult court in Florida and compared them to those who remained in the juvenile system. The study was large -- 2,738 subjects -- and rigorous. She found that those who had gone through the adult system were more likely to re-offend at two years and six years after their release. They also re-offended earlier than their peers and were more likely to escalate to violent crime.

Bishop spent thousands of hours interviewing kids in the adult system and found

that they "spent much of their time talking to more skilled and experienced offenders, who taught them new techniques of committing crime and avoiding detection."

This research bears out what any parent with common sense might predict. Take a 16-year-old who's headed down the wrong track and apply education, mental health services, and addiction services, and you

*"Most kids who get into serious trouble with the law need adult guidance. In addition, they won't find suitable role models in prison. Jailing youths with adult felons under spartan conditions will merely produce more street gladiators."*

- Princeton University Professor John J. DiIulo

greatly increase the chance he'll get on the right track. Take the same 16-year-old, give him none of those services but expose him to hardened adult criminals, and you greatly increase the chance that he will emerge a dangerous young man.

Our juvenile justice system is designed on the principle that kids are different from adults. Their habits and their character are

still developing, making adolescence a more conducive time to try rehabilitation than adulthood is. The juvenile system, therefore, provides more educational and counseling services to promote rehabilitation, which is in the best interest of the entire community. The adult system, however, emphasizes punishment over rehabilitation. In a very real way, when we send children to adult prisons

we are saying, "We have given up on you."

Our current system creates career criminals who will be a danger to our communities and a draw on our law-enforcement resources for decades. The important thing to remember with 16- and 17-year-olds is that, no matter how harshly we treat them, the overwhelming likelihood is that they will live among us for many years after their prison sentences end. What we do now can help determine whether they will be assets or dangers to our communities. Doesn't it make sense to invest in these kids now so that they can grow up to be taxpayers rather than recurrent inmates living at taxpayer expense?

Vanderbilt University Professor Mark A. Cohen found that preventing a teen from adopting an adult life of crime could save America between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million over a person's lifetime. We cannot afford to wait any longer to raise the age.

Do not misunderstand -- I would not for a moment suggest that we should not hold minors responsible for their crimes simply because of their youth. In fact, my organization, the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, supports models that call for offenders to make restitution to victims of crime. By all means, hold juveniles accountable, but hold them accountable in settings that will help them correct their behavior rather than exacerbate it.

Most juveniles enter the system before they have committed serious crimes. More than 70 percent of the 16- and 17-year-olds that our state prosecutes as adults are accused of minor, nonviolent crimes. This is clearly a golden opportunity to intercede before their delinquency progresses. The small minority of youths who commit serious crimes, A and B felonies, would continue to be treated as adults under legislation currently before the General Assembly.

It is important to remember that we are only talking about making this change for

nonviolent kids. Much of the support for treating teens as adults comes from fears of "super predators." Princeton University Professor John J. DiIulo coined that phrase to describe a new breed of highly violent juveniles he saw on the horizon. The super predators never materialized. Now, DiIulo admits that the results have been tragic. He told the *New York Times*, "Most juvenile offenders are not guilty of repeated or random acts of serious violence. Most kids who get into serious trouble with the law need adult guidance. In addition, they won't find suitable role models in prison. Jailing youths with adult felons under spartan conditions will merely produce more street gladiators."

DiIulo was responsible enough to look at the facts and reevaluate. So are the people of Connecticut. The "Raise the Age" bill before the General Assembly would return nonviolent 16- and 17-year-olds to the juvenile system. Connecticut is one of only three states in the nation that automatically treats these kids as adults. There are movements in the other two states, North Carolina and New York, to make the change as well. Increasingly citizens there are realizing the social and financial costs of putting children in the adult system.

The "Raise the Age" bill is drawing support from all quarters of our state: suburban and urban, Republican and Democrat. This is gratifying to see. I believe it is happening because this issue touches on values that are common to all of us: fairness and concern about the safety of our families.

*Hector Raul Glynn became executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) in April 2006. Previously, he was director of youth services for Catholic Charities, Inc., in Hartford. He has more than a decade of experience in not-for-profit management, youth development, and advocacy. In Hartford, he worked to develop and implement programs for at-risk youth. Glynn earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Southern California. The CTJJA, based in Bridgeport, was launched in November 2001 as a collaborative effort of the Center for Children's Advocacy, Connecticut Voices for Children, the Tow Foundation, and RYASAP. Its mission is "to promote a safe, effective, and equitable system of services designed to meet the needs of children and adolescents in, or at-risk of becoming involved in, the juvenile justice system."*



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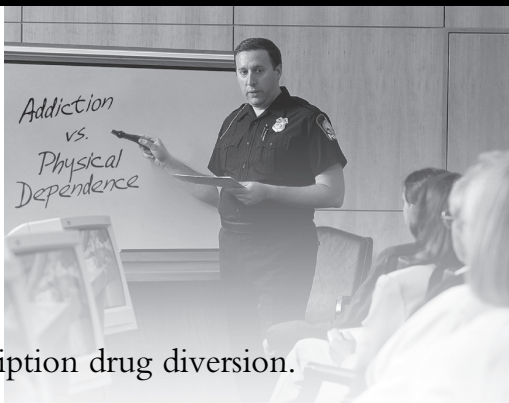
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**JOIN IN ON THE DEBATE...  
SHOULD 16- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS BE TREATED AS ADULTS?**

# SUS

**James Strillacci**  
Chief of Police, West Hartford



## As Adults in the Criminal Justice System? 16- and 17-Year-Olds as Juveniles, Not Adults

When police chiefs in Connecticut heard that the legislature might raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18, we thought, "They should be going the other way." Our experience is that younger teenagers are committing more serious crimes, but we were willing to keep an open mind to weigh the pros and cons.

The cons were obvious to us. The Committee on Children proposed two bills this February, one to extend juvenile status to 16- and 17-year-olds in 2009, and one to implement that change. We testified that the bills ignored consequences for police, prosecutors, and much of the justice system.

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division statistics show 16- and 17-year-olds commit far more than their share of crime. In FY 2005-06, 10,075 of them appeared in 12,633 criminal cases, or 10.5 percent of all adult criminal cases. Making them juveniles means extending juvenile procedure to 10,000 additional clients. Juvenile Court, juvenile shelters, and detention facilities are already at capacity. Adding 16- and 17-year-olds will increase their caseload by 60 percent, overwhelming the system, depriving under-16s of needed services, and subjecting younger detainees to the predations of older teens.

The bills would study how raising the age would affect state agencies, funding several, including the Judicial Department. It turned a blind eye to the impact on municipal agencies, and provided them no money. No 16- or 17-year-old goes to court without an investigation by police, predominantly local police.

Raising the age will raise the cost of investigations involving those teens. State law says arrested juveniles cannot be held where adults may be confined. Many departments will have to add or modify facilities to meet added demand.

State law says police cannot question juveniles unless a parent or guardian is present and both waive Miranda rights. Parents are not always available (troublesome teens are often those whose parents are scarce), and if you can contact them, they may not have transportation.

This means that juvenile cases take more time and labor than adult investigations for the same offenses.

The bills call for study of interview procedures. They should look at Massachusetts, where 16-year-olds (not 17-year-olds) are juveniles, but police do not need parents present to talk to them or even younger teens.

Most departments in the state are short of officers. The last thing we need is cases that will take more people and time

than they do today.

Officers cannot always find beds in detention for serious juvenile offenders. They cannot always find placement in shelters for lesser offenders. Where will we house two years' worth of additional teenagers? Many towns have started Juvenile Review Boards to divert minor offenders from court. Their caseload will climb, too.

*"We agree that jail is not the best way to correct teen behavior; it provides poor role models and can subject teens to the depredations of older offenders. Jail does not correct adults very well, either, but it excels in protecting communities from incarcerated criminals."*

*- West Hartford Chief of Police James Strillacci*

One big difference between 16- and 17-year-olds and younger teens is that they can get driver's licenses. Statistically, young drivers are the least proficient. Will juvenile court handle their traffic violations? How would we handle teen drunk drivers? Would police have to bring parents to the roadside before they can ask a 16-year-old driver about an accident or a traffic violation? Could we give you an accident report if a 17-year-old driver hit your car?

To their credit, the committee heeded our testimony and amended their proposed bill to study impact on local and private agencies, at traffic offenses, and at exchange of traffic-accident information, but we have no idea what their study will recommend. Most alarming, they rejected our suggestion that they set aside funds for local agencies.

The proponents say, "Connecticut is one of only three states that draw the line of criminal adulthood at 16." "Everybody's doing it" does not sway me. Mom used to ask, "If everybody else jumped off a bridge, should you?" One of the other holdout states is New York, home of the nation's biggest city, one that has reduced crime dramatically. Moreover, the proponents are not comparing apples to apples -- our other neighbor, Massachusetts, considers 17-year-olds adults, and Bay State rules for handling juveniles are far less restrictive than ours are.

The proponents say, "Raising the age of majority to 18 is consistent with the law in other contexts." Not really. Connecticut law lets a 16-year-old get a job, have a driver's license, and consent to sex. It will not let you buy liquor or get a pistol permit until you are 21. There is no single age of majority.

The proponents say, "Neuroscience research says that 16- and 17-year-olds have different capacity for judgment and mature reasoning than adults." With all respect due the neuroscientists, there are plenty of folks over 20 showing poor judgment and immature reasoning. Where do you draw the line?

The proponents say, "Raising the age promotes public safety, positive youth development,

and costs less." The first two claims rest on the rationale that services available to juveniles but not to 16's and 17's are more effective than incarceration.

We agree that jail is not the best way to correct teen behavior; it provides poor role models and can subject teens to the depredations of older offenders. Jail does not correct adults very well, either, but it excels in protecting communities

from incarcerated criminals.

Furthermore, the proponents give the impression kids are going to adult jail in droves, but in truth, incarceration of 16- and 17-year-olds is low. In FY 2005-06, there were an estimated 150 in DOC custody post conviction, and 270 pre-trial, despite the age group's involvement in 12,633 cases.

There are many options -- youthful offender,


accelerated rehabilitation, community court, probation -- so most teens are never incarcerated. If a teenager goes to jail on a first offense, it is probably serious.

Will raising the age save money? A 2003-2004 study estimated the cost at \$84 million. In 2009, it will cost more.

In conclusion, is the benefit worth the cost? The noblest goal of the "Raise the Age" movement is to provide 16- and 17-year-olds with juvenile services such as psychological evaluations and counseling, drug testing, and substance-abuse treatment. We think millions to be spent rearranging the legal system could instead provide ample services to 16- and 17-year-olds without changing their legal status.

Connecticut's police will uphold the law. Whatever the Legislature decides, we will do our best to make it work. If they change the age, we hope they will support the local agencies serving teens in trouble.

*James J. Strillacci has been with the West Hartford Police Department since 1976 and has been its chief since 1992. He is legislative co-chair for the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association and is a past president of the organization.*



### LOJACK MOTORCYCLE RECOVERY ALERT

**Police seize three motorcycles and guns after tracking the first stolen LoJack-equipped motorcycle in Connecticut**

Stolen Bike Kawasaki ZX 10  
Purchased from Excalibur Powersports  
Stolen From New London, CT

**Three Motorcycles Recovered!  
Valued over: \$20,000**

Bike Recovered by Bridgeport Police and CT Regional Auto Theft Task Force

Recovery Time 20 minutes  
Recovery Value \$10,000

LoJack is the only vehicle tracking and recovery system that works directly with the police to get your bike back -- fast.

**The Crime** On a Monday afternoon, the owner of a 2005 Kawasaki ZX10 discovered that the motorcycle had been stolen sometime over the weekend and immediately called the New London Police Department to report the theft. The motorcycle's information was entered into the police crime data base, which automatically activated the bike's hidden LoJack system. Within minutes, Police Patrols in Bridgeport received the LoJack signal from the stolen Kawasaki and began tracking it. The Regional Auto Theft Task Force responded and assisted the Bridgeport Police. The stolen motorcycle was tracked to a two car garage behind a home in a residential area of Bridgeport in less than 20 minutes. Detectives set up surveillance while a search warrant was applied for. The suspect, a career criminal, with numerous prior larceny and gun convictions returned home and was quickly taken into custody without incident. He is already serving four years for the bike thefts and faces pending weapon charges in court.

**The Recovery** Detectives arrived with a search warrant and entered the garage identified by their LoJack Police Tracking Computers and discovered the LoJack-equipped Kawasaki. An additional Kawasaki motorcycle was parked next to the LoJack bike, but had yet to be reported stolen. The owner of the bike, also from New London, was contacted by police. That owner checked the garage and realized that the bike had indeed been stolen. Three stolen motorcycles, three guns, and a re-VIN'd car were all seized. For information about tracking or LoJack products such as LoJack for Motorcycles visit [www.lojack.com](http://www.lojack.com) or call 1-800-4 LOJACK.

**LOJACK**  
FOR MOTORCYCLES

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# Law Enforcement Profile:

By LEISA TAYLOR  
Correspondent

## Emergency Response Team Formed to Protect Communities

The events of 9/11 -- terrorism on American soil -- and the deaths at Columbine High School in Colorado, remind us no community is immune from violence. To deal with such situations, the police departments in Trumbull, Monroe, Easton, Wilton, and Darien have united to form the Southwest Regional Emergency Response Team (ERT). The SWAT-like unit is designed to handle high-risk and crisis situations in their jurisdictions. The cooperative effort enables small towns to combine resources for incidents ranging from high-risk warrants and barricaded suspects to search-and-rescue operations.

"It gives the departments the opportunity to mobilize a large amount of personnel in a short period of time," said Trumbull Police Lt. Ronald Kirby, commander of the ERT. "So far, we've been able to handle any situation that's been presented to us. It gives the towns the ability to call us in and then put their normal resources back to work protecting the rest of the town while we control the incident."

Lt. Kirby explained, "It makes perfect sense...For instance, Wilton has some 40 officers. At the push of a button, they put their five officers into our team and all of a sudden, it multiplies to 31 officers -- and they are still able to keep the majority of their department usable for other things. We're able to go in and help, as opposed to draining resources."

Wilton Police Chief Edward Kulhawik said his town's participation in the team evolved from his residence in Trumbull and friendship with Trumbull Police Chief Tom Kiely. Darien Police Chief Duane Lovella also lives in Trumbull.

"We had a need for a response team in Wilton," Chief Kulhawik said. "This team is more than I could have imagined in terms of quality and interagency cooperation. Although the frequency of these types of (emergency) calls is very low, the risk is very, very high." He said that the five police chiefs meet several times a year to discuss the team's vision and objectives as well as any problems or concerns.

Lt. Kirby, on the Trumbull police force for 22 years, has been the leader of the 31-member ERT since its beginning shortly after 9/11. According to him, Trumbull Police Chief Kiely and his predecessor as chief, James Barry, "came up with the concept of forming a team that was specially trained to handle any type of emergency."

"We first started out with just Trumbull in June 2002, within a month or so the Monroe Police Department came on board, and then Easton three or four months later. We were almost two and a half years with just the three depart-



**Above: Officer Todd Edwards is about to "breach" the front door of a house during a training exercise as two other members of the Southwest Regional Emergency Response Team aim their weapons at the doorway. Below: Officer Greg Lee of Trumbull with his weapon ready as the Emergency Response Team prepares to move.**

(Photos courtesy Southwest Regional Emergency Response Team)



ments, and then last year, Wilton and Darien both decided to join," Lt. Kirby said. He noted that Stratford and Fairfield are large enough to have their own teams. "Newtown and the other towns up there were going to form their own team, but for whatever reason, they just never did."

In its five years of operation, the Southwest Regional ERT has responded to 18 incidents or "missions." Lt. Kirby said that most of the calls have been for people who refuse to come out of their house for some reason, such as avoiding arrest. "We do warrants that are deemed high-risk by whatever agency asks us to serve them," he said. "An example of a

low-risk warrant would be someone who gave out a bad check and doesn't want to turn themselves in. A high-risk warrant would be a situation involving weapons or threats against the police officers."

Lt. Kirby said that the mission the team is probably proudest of was also the hardest. "It was in January 2003, and we had just the two towns, Trumbull and Monroe. Easton had come on the team but was still in the training phase," he said. "The team members were actually training down at the Trumbull Mall -- getting familiar with the layout -- when we received a call that there was an armed suspect barricaded right down the street from the Trumbull Police

Department. It turned out that it was a Bridgeport police sergeant who had a domestic (dispute) with his girlfriend, fired a bunch of shots at her, and then barricaded himself in the house. The problem was that the sergeant was heavily armed and actually out-gunned the initial officers."

"It was Martin Luther King Day, it was two degrees below zero, and it was snowing. At the time, we had not had any cold-weather gear issued to us. We had a few military jackets, but that was pretty much the extent of our cold-weather gear. We had been training inside, so we were all dressed for summer." Lt. Kirby said that negotiations with the sergeant lasted for 18 hours. "And our officers stood out there and refused to go home though they were frozen solid."

"Although the outcome was not what we hoped -- the officer took his life -- we worked in conjunction with the State Police SWAT team and the Fairfield SWAT team, and our officers acted heroically. They did exactly what they were trained to do, and it was a good testament to their dedication to the unit... I think that was the proudest day, the saddest day, and the hardest day -- all in one. But it was a good test to show us that we were ready and capable to do the job," said Lt. Kirby.

"Nobody else got hurt," added Sgt. Ken Jones, the ERT's assistant commander. "Unfortunately, the officer took his life, but no one in the surrounding areas was hurt. His girlfriend and her small baby got out of the house."

The ERT's most recent mission was late last year in Monroe, where an individual barricaded himself inside his home. Lt. Kirby said, "We assembled the team and were responding, but when the individual was told that the SWAT team was on the way, he decided to give up and come out."

The team is only activated upon a request for assistance from one of the five member police departments. When a request comes in, Lt. Kirby pages each of the team members. If a member is on duty in his respective police department, he is expected to respond as soon as possible without endangering the safety of his own town. If a member is off duty but available to respond, it is mandatory that he do so. Only members who have notified Kirby of their unavailability (due to perhaps sickness or vacation plans) are exempted.

Lt. Kirby stressed the dedication of the team members. "Each call that we've had since our inception has seen a 90 percent response from the entire unit. We've had members call up from weddings out of town and say, 'My response time is about an hour and a half, but if

(Continued on page 13)

# Law Enforcement Profile—

(Continued from page 12)

you need me, I'm on my way." Lt. Kirby noted, "I left my wife in a grocery store once and responded to a call. She had to call her parents to pick her up." He said that the response time for being fully operational at a scene is less than one hour, "but from the time we put the page out, we usually have 10-15 officers on the scene within 15-20 minutes."

The members of the ERT all volunteered to be part of the unit. Lt. Kirby said that members have at least three years on the job, and most are officers, detectives, or sergeants. "But once they're on the team, their rank doesn't come into play," he said. "It's their position, their training, and what their responsibilities are for that particular mission."

Each applicant to the team is tested in areas such as agility and firearms, and each must attend training schools before becoming a team member. Once on the team, members are trained in specific

areas. For example, there are "breachers," who specialize in breaking into an area or vehicle. In addition, there are entry personnel, perimeter personnel, snipers, tactical medics, and gas deployment personnel. Members are also cross-trained in other areas in case of a member's absence.

Lt. Kirby is realistic, however, about what the team can and cannot do. "Can we be prepared for every single scenario or situation? We don't claim to know everything about every possible scenario. For example, we do not train our officers for bombs, because there are specialized officers for that. It's better for us to call in experts in that situation."

"The FBI has a hostage rescue team that is better than we are. If necessary, we would not hesitate to call in the state police if we felt they were better capable of handling a situation. However, the way we look at it is, if we can hold the scene or make the scene better until the federal or state government arrives with their specialized unit, then we have accomplished our mission. That's what we're designed to do in those situations – not make the situation worse, but do some good by holding the condition until someone else gets there," said Lt. Kirby.

Lt. Kirby views the ERT as a potential asset for the Connecticut State Police. He said that the troopers are an outstanding, professional, and well-trained team. "Their reputation precedes them. To be able to work in any capacity with them is an honor for us. We would like to think that they would rely on us if necessary."

Training exercises are conducted once a month for eight hours, and every third month there is firearms requalification. The ERT has a training committee, and all exercises are approved by Lt. Kirby and Sgt. Jones. "It's important to understand that we're putting them in the worst of the worst situations, and they have to be properly trained and ready," Lt. Kirby said. "When we show up on the scene, our main goal is that no one gets hurt and everybody gets out safely, including the suspect. The more we train, the less chance we have of someone getting hurt. So when we take on a new task, we make sure that we train enough with that task that we are comfortable with it. We can do it in our sleep."

Lt. Kirby said that funding for the ERT has not been an issue so far. "We understood that the towns were not going to have a magical fund that was going to be able to fund the team," he said. "So the officers basically volunteered to do this with the understanding that they were not going to get paid for training. It was more important for the officers to form a team than to get compensated for it. Instead, they often accepted comp time."

"What we've tried to do is minimize the (financial) impact on the towns and on the resources that the towns already



The ERT is shown here during one of their monthly training sessions performing a stack formation for a hallway clearing exercise.

have in their budgets. A lot of the equipment has been obtained through grants. For example, the town of Trumbull has received over \$300,000 in grants since late 2003. Homeland Security has been very helpful in obtaining equipment for us. We are a perfect example that Trumbull, CT, is getting Homeland Security money from the federal government. We're able to be a better team because of the grant process."

Lt. Kirby added, "In the beginning, we used a lot of programs that were available, like a military program where equipment was being returned to the

system enables officers to see around corners, into second-story windows, and under doors, and then relay that signal back to the command post.

"Right now if there was a call-out, we could drive that trailer to wherever the incident was, and every officer in Trumbull could respond to wherever we are, walk into the back of that trailer, and come out fully outfitted," said Sgt. Jones. The Ford Expedition is equipped with running boards in case the officers need to ride standing and thereby effect a quick entry into a structure.

*"I think that the most important factor in our success is that all five chiefs are 100 percent behind the team and are 100 percent supportive of what we're doing."*

*- Lt. Ronald Kirby, Trumbull Police Department*

major bases. We were able to go in, see what they had available to us, and get clothing, equipment, and weapons. We did not have to put a burden on the taxpayers and town, and this got us through to a certain point. After about a year, we were able to budget some money into the overall police department budget to get things like body armor and helmets. We did it in such a way that it wasn't a large sum of money in any given year."

Each town is responsible for equipping its own personnel, as well as paying any overtime incurred. In Wilton, Chief Kulhawik said that the impact on his budget has been relatively small, and that the town's initial investment came from asset forfeiture money seized from drug acquisitions. "It's a minimal amount of money (to spend) with regard to the amount of return we get," he said.

The ERT's resources include a 2006 Ford Expedition, an ambulance donated by the town of Trumbull, and a large trailer to hold the officers' equipment. "Anything that we might need on a call-out is in that trailer," Lt. Kirby explained. The trailer is equipped with a generator. It houses weaponry, lighting equipment, helmets, gas masks, a self-contained breathing apparatus, fire-retardant suits, tools for breaching doors, and clothing. A wireless camera

Both Lt. Kirby and Sgt. Jones feel that the Southwest Regional ERT is a permanent feature for the five towns. "I think that the most important factor in our success is that all five chiefs are 100 percent behind the team and are 100 percent supportive of what we're doing," Lt. Kirby said. "To have that kind of support is amazing. They work together so well that they've basically given us a perfect scenario to operate in. I think a big part is also that everybody is on the team voluntarily."

Lt. Kirby credits his team members for their dedication to the unit. "Every single guy on the team gives as much as we do and is just as important as we are. It's an outstanding group of officers that dedicate themselves to training hard and being the best. They're the ones that are going through the door first and putting their lives on the line on a daily basis. Every day you put your uniform on, there is that fear factor of whether something bad is going to happen today. But you know it's your job."

Sgt. Jones added, "The best way to describe us is when you see something bad, we're the ones running to what everybody else is running away from. 'It can't happen here' shouldn't be in anyone's vocabulary."

(Contact Leisa at [l.taylor@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:l.taylor@thejusticejournal.com))

## SOUTHWEST REGIONAL E.R.T. MEMBERS

### Chiefs of Police:

Thomas Kiely, Trumbull  
John Salvatore, Monroe  
John Solomon, Easton  
Edward Kulhawik, Wilton  
Duane Lovella, Darien

### Darien:

Sgt. Kayne Winn  
Sgt. Mark Cirillo  
Sgt. John Lawlor  
Sgt. William Duignan  
Sgt. Jerry Marron  
Det. Sam Bocuzzi

### Easton:

Sgt. John Arnold  
Off. Dan Buck

### Monroe:

Sgt. Jay Torreso  
Off. Greg Smith  
Sgt. Pete Howard  
Off. Tim Larkin  
Off. Mike Sweeney

### Trumbull:

Lt. Ronald Kirby  
Sgt. Phil Hynes  
Off. William Ruscoe  
Sgt. Ken Jones  
Off. Don Allen  
Off. R.J. Carlson  
Off. Todd Edwards  
Off. Robert Lee  
Off. Greg Lee  
Off. Brian Weir  
Off. Tim Fedor  
Sgt. Lenny Scinto  
Off. Mike Redgate

### Wilton:

Sgt. Stephan Brennan  
Off. Robert Kluk  
Off. Greg Phillipson  
Off. Joe Calorossi  
Off. Pete Trahan

# Amber Alert ID Cards—

(Continued from page 6)

Vetter said that updating a child's ID card is the responsibility of the parent. He said that the card should be updated a minimum of once a year for children three and older. For infants and younger children, the recommendation is every quarter, or basically whenever the photograph no longer resembles the child. Vetter added that no child is too young to be registered. "We've had a number of parents who have registered a baby one week old," he said.

The first card issued to a family is free, with each additional card costing only \$2. Vetter said that the Danbury Rotary Club offers the ID program at 30-35 events per year. Vetter himself spends approximately 20 hours per week on the program, from answering calls to scheduling registrations.

Other than the \$2 fee for each additional card, the only requirement is for the parent/guardian to fill out and sign a brief consent form. The data collected, including the electronic signatures, is immediately encrypted for storage on the laptop and delivery to the database. After storage, the laptop records are purged.

At Children's Day, both Rotarians and members of the Woman's Club volunteered to operate the computer systems. To date, Rotary clubs throughout the state have put an estimated 30,000 Connecticut children in the database

housed at the Connecticut Department of Public Safety. Approximately 50,000 ID cards have been distributed to parents.

Vetter emphasized that school ID cards issued to students are not Amber Alert ID cards. Vetter said that he would not advise a parent to carry a school ID card in his or her wallet. "If you lose it, someone has all your child's information," he said.

Amber Alert is named after a nine-year-old girl who was kidnapped while playing near her home in Texas. Amber Hagerman was later found murdered. In May 2003, President George W. Bush signed into law a national Amber Alert program which shields all media outlets from any liability associated with disseminating information on a missing child. An Amber Alert plan was created and implemented in Connecticut through the efforts of then-Gov. John G. Rowland and then-Lt. Gov. Jodi Rell, the Connecticut Broadcasters Association, the Connecticut State Police, and the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association.

Dates for Amber Alert Child ID events are listed at [www.amberchildid.org](http://www.amberchildid.org). The website for the Danbury Rotary Club is [www.danbury.org](http://www.danbury.org), or Bob Vetter can be contacted at 203/748-1105.

(Contact Leisa at [l.taylor@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:l.taylor@thejusticejournal.com))



## Events & Notices:

### Saturday, April 14

Amber Alert Kids ID Session. April 14 Naugatuck YMCA 10 AM – 2 PM. For information contact Bob Vetter @ 203-748-1105 or go to [www.danburyrotary.org](http://www.danburyrotary.org).

### Monday, April 23

MADD Ct. Sponsoring: Pasta Dinner in Honor of Julia "Nana" Coppola. Foxon Country House, East Haven April 23 6:00 PM

### Saturday, April 28

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Rally will be held Saturday, April 28 at 11 AM in the lobby of the State Capitol. For more information, contact Mary Hamilton at 888-833-4764.

### Wednesday, May 2

Henry Blansfield, MD, seminar on Alcohol & Drug Education @ The Danbury Hospital May 2, Wednesday 7 PM – 8:30 PM. For information call Danbury Hospital Call Center @ 866-374-0007

### Monday, May 2

MADD Ct. Sponsoring: May 2, 7:00 PM Dinner honoring three victims, Danny Carter, Lori Hudak, Caryn Eng, Oronoque Country Club, Stratford, CT

### Friday, May 4

MADD Ct. Sponsoring: May 4 8:00 AM Youth Legislative Training Day, State Capitol, Hartford, CT

### [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

Missing and Exploited Children -- Get involved in the Poster-Partner Program. Receive E-mail alerts about children who become missing in your area. Go to [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com), then to Help Now, and click onto Get Involved.

National Report

# 17,000 killed in senseless act

## Authorities search for answers on a day of sadness

A nation is in mourning as thousands were suddenly killed yesterday all across the country by people who had been drinking and driving. Traffic was backed up in all 50 states making it difficult for emergency vehicles to reach the victims. Hospitals in every city remain overwhelmed with thousands of critically injured patients. The help of National Guard troops as well as...

... simply are not enough resources to meet the demands of this catastrophe. The president spoke early this morning at an emergency press conference expressing his condolences to the friends and families of those who were lost. One official in DeBeau County called this "the most devastating moment in American history." In some places, entire families were killed, leaving many to wonder how something like this could happen in our country today. In a show of support, long lines of volunteers have formed at the... of blood and the... enters to... to

If this were today's headline, would you notice? Last year, drinking and driving actually did kill about 17,000 people. It injured half a million more. But because it happened over a year rather than in a single day, it's not always front-page news. If you drink, find a safe way home. And do your part to keep drunk driving out of the headlines.

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## Violent Criminals—

(Continued from page 5)

wise,” said Dr. Monahan. “But these types age out—if you look at the prison population most are under 40 and most straighten out after age 40. They stop breaking the law at middle age, and if they can find a nice girl and a job, can become decent citizens. If we could only figure out how to bottle it, we could stop criminal behavior before it begins.”

What kind of woman is attracted to violent criminals?

“Criminals attract a certain type of woman that may not be as antisocial as the inmate, but is attracted to criminal behavior—the kind of sex and living on the wild side that comes with criminals,” said Dr. Monahan. “But I suspect in the Trautwein case she (Kos) was surprised when she saw him kill the woman.”

How often do crimes such as the Trautwein murder take place?

“These instances are very rare,” said Lt. Cooney. “When they occur, they are shocking and no effort is spared to apprehend the perpetrator, as you saw in the New York City mugging case. As in the Trautwein case, the suspect is most often caught, convicted, and locked up for a long time.”

How can seniors become proactive at keeping themselves safe from violent criminals?

“Common sense things we all should do, like keeping your doors locked when at home and not allowing anyone inside that you don’t completely trust,” said Lt. Cooney. “Take a friend with you if possible when you go out shopping, and carry a whistle or some noise-making device that can alert others. Dogs are great companions and scare off intruders.”

(Contact Chandra at [c.nilesfolsom@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:c.nilesfolsom@thejusticejournal.com))

## Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors

### AT HOME:

Never open your door automatically; install and use a peephole.

Install deadbolt locks on all your doors. Lock your doors and windows. (Burglaries involving older persons often involve unlocked doors and windows.) Keep your garage doors locked.

Vary your daily routine.

Don't hesitate to report crime or suspicious activities. A concerned neighbor is often the best protection against crime if suspicious persons and activities are noticed and reported to the police promptly.

Leave lights on when going out at night. When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks and sounds occupied. Use an automatic timer to turn on lights, radio, or TV.

Notify neighbors and the police when going away on a trip. Cancel deliveries such as newspapers and arrange for someone -- a neighbor's child, perhaps -- to mow the lawn if need be. Arrange for your mail to be held by the post office, or ask a neighbor to collect it for you.

Be wary of unsolicited offers to make repairs to your home. Deal only with reputable businesses.

Keep an inventory with serial numbers and photographs of re-saleable appliances, antiques, and furniture. Leave copies in a safe place.

Keep your home well lit at night, inside and out; keep curtains closed.

Ask for proper identification from delivery persons or strangers. Don't be afraid of asking -- if they are legitimate, they won't mind.

Never let a stranger into your home. If a stranger asks to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him or her.

Do not leave notes on your door when you are gone, and **DO NOT** hide your keys under the mat or in other conspicuous places.

If you arrive at home and suspect a stranger may be inside, **DON'T GO IN**. Leave quietly and call 911 to report the crime.

### OUTSIDE:

If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue your attacker. Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.

Avoid walking alone at night. Try to have a friend accompany you in high-risk areas, even during the daytime.

Stay away from buildings and doorways; walk in well-lighted areas.

Avoid carrying weapons -- they may be used against you.

Always plan your routine and stay alert to your surroundings. Walk confidently.

Have your key ready when approaching your front door or car.

Don't dangle your purse away from your body. The elderly are often victims of purse snatchings and street robberies.

Don't carry large, bulky shoulder bags; carry only what you need. Try sewing a small pocket inside your jacket or coat, or use a fanny pack. If you don't have a purse, no one will try to snatch it.

(Source: [www.westchestergov.com/ps/Site\\_Index/Safety\\_911/Crime\\_Prevention\\_For\\_Seniors](http://www.westchestergov.com/ps/Site_Index/Safety_911/Crime_Prevention_For_Seniors))

# MISSING:

## FAMILY ABDUCTION

### ARAGORN HORTON



**DOB:** Apr 14, 2001 **Missing:** Dec 24, 2005

**Age Now:** 5 **Sex:** Male **Race:** White

**Hair:** Blonde **Eyes:** Blue **Height:** 3'6" (107cm) **Weight:** 45lbs (20kg)

**Missing From:** Williamsburg, Mass.

Aragorn was last seen on 12/24/2005. He may be in the company of his non-custodial mother and an adult male. They may still be in the local area. .



### ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children  
**1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST)**

Williamsburg, Mass. Police Department - 413-238-0400

# MISSING:

## ENDANGERED RUNAWAY

### NICHOLE HIRSCHMAN



**DOB:** Sep 3, 1990 **Missing:** Mar 13, 2007

**Age Now:** 16 **Sex:** Female **Race:** White

**Hair:** Brown **Eyes:** Blue **Height:** 5'6" (168cm) **Weight:** 156lbs (71kg)

**Missing From:** Batavia, NY

Nichole was last seen on March 13, 2007. She may travel to the Rochester, New York area. Nichole's ears are pierced several times. Her left nostril is pierced. When Nichole was last seen her hair was dyed black.



### ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT:

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Genesee County Sheriff's Office (New York) 1-585-343-5000



# What If...?

By CAPT. GARY MACNAMARA

Fairfield Police Department  
Special to The Justice Journal



## What If You Want to Make a Citizen's Arrest?

Remember Gomer Pyle, the gas station attendant on the 60's TV series, "The Andy Griffith Show" (still in reruns)? In one episode, he runs down the street yelling, "Citizen's arrest!" while chasing Deputy Barney Fife after witnessing him make an illegal U-turn. Having seen the violation, Gomer, a good citizen, wanted to ensure the alleged perpetrator was brought to justice.

A citizen's arrest means that a civilian has the right to detain a suspected criminal until proper law enforcement personnel can assume custody. It is a concept that dates back to English common law. During the earlier days, performing a citizen's arrest was probably a much more common practice, with store owners detaining people caught in the act of stealing. Over the years, as criminals became better armed and law enforcement became more readily available, the popularity of citizen's arrests seemed to fade.

Currently, the Connecticut General Statute 53a-22 allows for a private person, acting on his or her own account, to use reasonable physical force upon another person if he or she reasonably believes it is needed to effect an arrest. The citizen also must reasonably believe the person has committed an offense, and in the end, the person has to have actually committed such offense for it to be legal.

A private person can also make an arrest if he or she is directed to do so by a peace officer. The statute does grant some limited authority for a citizen to arrest someone and detain them on behalf of the police.

With all the increased focus on citizen involvement in keeping our communities safe, you might think about making a citizen's arrest. Could you do it? Would you do it? Should you do it? To help make your decision, you should have a good understanding of all that goes into a police officer placing someone under arrest.

It starts with being sworn in as a police officer in the State of Connecticut. The officer has to pledge to uphold the laws of the State of Connecticut and the Constitution of the United States. The laws in the

State of Connecticut grant authority to make arrests to state and local police, as well as other specific persons defined in the Connecticut General Statutes. Bail enforcement officers (bounty hunters) are given authority under a different statute, involving specific circumstances with defendants already released on bond.

In addition to the governmental authority, police have to understand exactly what an arrest is. Generally, it is an action taken by the police or a person with lawful authority to place someone in custody in connection with the commission of a crime. At the police academy, police receive extensive and ongoing training on when and how to make an arrest.

In order to understand when to make an arrest, police officers receive training and updates on state laws and some federal laws. They have to know what a violation is, how to investigate it, and ways to determine whom the violator is. In doing so, they develop "probable cause" to say a crime was committed and the person they have arrested committed the crime. They also need to know the seriousness of the violation. Is it a felony or a misdemeanor? A felony is generally more serious than a misdemeanor and allows officers to take steps they may or may not take for a misdemeanor.

Police also need a full understanding of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which acts as an umbrella over unreasonable search and seizure (arrests). *A legal arrest can only be made if it is within the guidelines of the Fourth Amendment.*



*Could you do it? Would you do it? Should you do it? To help make your decision, you should have a good understanding of all that goes into a police officer placing someone under arrest.*

After the authority and training have been received, police officers consider other important aspects of making an arrest, including the proper equipment to protect them when making the arrest, and the equipment needed to secure the arrestee so he or she remains in custody. This involves proper identification, such as a badge and perhaps a uniform, a firearm for protection, handcuffs for securing the individual and preventing escapes, a radio for requesting backup if needed, and a vehicle for transportation.

With all the police authority, training, and equipment needed to make an arrest, you may wonder about even thinking of making a citizen's arrest. Although Gomer Pyle attempted to make a citizen's arrest, it does not appear he had any of the training or equipment a police officer would have to make a proper arrest. Citizens get little, if any, training on what are violations, yet the statute empowering them to make an arrest states that, in order to be legal, the person they detain has to have committed the violation for which he or she is detained.

One of the biggest problems with a citizen's arrest is the potential for making a mistake. There is very little protection for a private citizen who detains an innocent person. Citizens rarely have equipment to help protect themselves or to detain an individual they have arrested. Untrained citizens risk serious bodily injury or worse if they act to arrest someone, and they may have no way of notifying anyone to send help.

In an emergency, a citizen's arrest may be useful, especially if it is at the request of a law enforcement officer. However, most law enforcement officers would likely discourage untrained civilians acting on their own from making a citizen's arrest.

There may be a situation where a citizen chooses to intervene, such as when witnessing a serious assault or seeing a person about to commit a serious crime. In general, a citizen's time and effort are better spent notifying the police and observing the suspect and the crime scene instead of acting to arrest someone. Details such as the description and current location of the suspect, as well as vehicle information, will all certainly be helpful when the police arrive to investigate. Citizens should be the best witnesses they can and leave the arresting to those who have much more authority, training, and equipment necessary to remain safe while effecting the arrest.

If you find yourself in a position where you may think of making a citizen's arrest, remember, the Connecticut Statutes may have granted you limited authority, *but you have no room for error, perhaps no equipment, and inadequate means of calling for assistance.*

A citizen's witnessed account is usually preferred to a citizen's arrest, with one exception: a citizen's *self-arrest* for a crime he or she has actually committed is always allowed. Police will always welcome people turning themselves in for a crime they have personally committed. A citizen only needs the authority of a guilty conscience for that.

(Contact Capt. MacNamara at: [g.macnamara@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:g.macnamara@thejusticejournal.com))

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## Police Simulator—

(Continued from page 1)

videos on a large screen controlled from the computer and interacts with the officers. The tested officers are asked to act as if they were in a real-life situation and even talk to the screen, which Sgt. Mattei admits can be difficult. The goal is to have the officers communicate with the people involved in such circumstances.

"If the officers are doing a good job, I can set the scenario to cooperate with them," Sgt. Mattei said. "If not, I can set the scenario to go against them by causing their weapons to malfunction and see how they react when a weapon malfunctions or runs out of ammunition. We can mess with them and put them in stressful situations."

The stress became apparent during another simulation, when my partner (a computer-generated female officer) and I responded to a domestic disturbance call. When we entered, the family was frantic and shouted their father was going to kill their daughter. We saw the muscular, shirtless man on top of the teenager with his hands around her throat. My partner hit him repeatedly with a baton, but to the father it was as bothersome as a mosquito bite. He tossed the officer aside as if she were a toy. The father jumped back on the teen and choked her even harder. I fired four rounds into his shoulder -- which did nothing to deter him. I had to face the choice every officer might: Do I kill or not? I did, and that particular simulation ended.

However, the exercise was not over. Computer technology gave me a different set of circumstances to deal with. This time, the father grabbed my partner's sidearm, shouted, and fired at me. Sgt. Mattei said an officer can use force to protect a third person, and in a situation like that, you should be willing to shoot. In this instance, the teenager's windpipe was compressed and the attacker said he was going to kill her and was apparently willing to kill.

According to Sgt. Mattei, other officers said they would go around the back and hit the father or spray him. "It's an option, but there may not be enough time. The father is extremely agitated, pumped up on adrenaline, and not willing to lis-

ten... He threw the officer around as if she was nothing. Now the other officer has to make a decision: 'What am I going to do here?' Although this is speculation, the teenage girl would have probably died, and eventually we would have had to deal with him."

This response is called the "ODA" loop, in which the officer "Observes, Decides, and Acts." Civilians may ask, "Why not shoot them in the arm or leg and not kill them?" In some states it has been recommended that officers be trained for non-lethal shooting at arms and legs -- but a problem arises as to which is harder to hit: a moving arm or a stationary chest? An officer must also consider what might happen if a bullet misses. It could conceivably travel 200 yards and hit someone else, ricochet, or embed itself in a vehicle. "We train our officers to shoot for the center of available mass, such as a head or body shot, but shooting for a small target under a high-stress situation, your hit probability is low, if any," Sgt. Mattei explained.

Not all the FATS scenarios require use of a firearm. While investigating unusual behavior in an alley, an officer finds an intoxicated man who is holding a baby in a car seat and has dropped her several times. After spouting a few hostile words at the officer, he removes a massive butcher knife from under the seat, drops the baby again, and charges. Sgt. Mattei says such a situation would be perfect for using a TASER (a weapon that shoots electricity to stun a person) or pepper gas.

One of the biggest advantages in the FATS system is the use of alternate outcomes. A shot that wounds may save the day, but under slightly different circumstances, it may kill a person.

Reality training, according to Sgt. Mattei, is crucial to the safety of the officers; however, the FATS system only goes so far. For "green" recruits coming in from the police academy, the simulator is only the first step. The next is putting the officers in a situation where they must use their training to apprehend another officer pretending to be a suspect. The department uses devices which look and feel like real pistols but fire small plastic BBs. The "shot" officer feels a slight tap and knows he is hit.

Sgt. Mattei recalls some of the amazing things in his 34-year career with the Danbury Police Department. "I was involved in a birth in a hospital parking lot at 2 a.m." He also says, "I've seen some people you think there's no hope for turn their lives around and become good citizens. These are things that make me feel like I made a little bit of a difference."

Sgt. Mattei says he is affected when someone is killed, but he says he thinks the total reality training program, with the

combination of experience and technology, can help officers save more lives. Thus far, he has never fired his weapon at a person.

"Normal people run from gunfire, and we run to it," Sgt. Mattei said. "We've taken on that responsibility, so we train them with the best tools and training available. That's the goal -- to bring the officers back safely."

(Contact David at [d.scales@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:d.scales@thejusticejournal.com))



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## BLOOPERS & BLUNDERS:

by Jim Sukach - [www.quicksolvemysteries.com](http://www.quicksolvemysteries.com)



### ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

A photographer wrote to a newspaper columnist for advice. She had videotaped a crime, and she had a question about reporting it.

Friends had asked Mary to videotape their wedding. During the reception, the bride's father announced his wallet had been lost or stolen. He asked that if anyone has it, they could return it, and no questions would be asked. Unfortunately, it was not returned.

But when Mary reviewed her videotape, she saw the groom taking the wallet out of his father-in-law's jacket pocket! Apparently, the groom had stolen the wallet from his new father-in-law, and then he still refused to return it anonymously when he had the chance. Now he was caught red-handed, and it was too late to make up an alibi!



# Due Process

RICHARD T. MEEHAN JR.



A "Concerned Parent" writes:

*To The Justice Journal:*

*An 18-year-old friend of my 17-year-old son was arrested for having several cans of beer unopened in his car. I am trying to explain to my son the seriousness of this. Am I right? What are the penalties he faces? What could happen to his parents if he was drinking and there was an accident and someone was injured?*

*(Name withheld)*

Dear Concerned Parent,

You are correct to advise your teenager that possession of alcohol in a motor vehicle by a minor is a serious problem. Connecticut has a zero-tolerance posture when it comes to minors possessing alcohol, whether or not they are in a car. Laws involving alcohol use and possession consider anyone under 21 to be a minor, even though 18 is otherwise the age of majority in Connecticut. Whether or not the can of beer is opened is irrelevant.

Under Connecticut General Statutes, §30-89, it is a violation, punishable by a fine up to \$500, for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or possess alcoholic beverages. The motor vehicle laws carry even greater penalties for the minor who possesses an alcoholic beverage in a

motor vehicle. In that instance, the commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles will conduct a hearing to determine whether the youngster knew, or had reason to know, that there was alcohol in the vehicle, and may revoke the youngster's operator's license for a period of 60 days. The only exception to this rule is someone 18 or older who is engaged in the performance of services for an employer who has an appropriate liquor permit.

Fake identification cards present even greater problems. Anyone who misrepresents his or her age in applying for an ID card may be fined and imprisoned up to 30 days (§1.1h C.G.S.). A minor who misrepresents his or her age or displays the license of another to obtain liquor also faces up to 30 days of incarceration (§ 30-88a C.G.S.).

Last, the commissioner may suspend the license of any minor who misuses an operator's license or purchases or possesses alcoholic beverages for a period of 150 days! The arresting police department notifies the DMV that a minor has been found in possession of alcohol. The DMV then summons the youth to its Wethersfield offices, where he or she is required to undergo a counseling/lecture session. Failure to comply can lead to a license suspension. We often see cases

where there are three or four kids in a car and beer in the trunk. The penalties can extend to all occupants of the car, not just the driver.

Anyone who is caught driving while his or her license has been revoked faces even greater penalties. Driving with a suspended license can lead to further loss of license and jail!

Parents who make a family car available to a youngster who causes an accident are responsible for the injuries the child has caused. If the youngster is driving while impaired, those civil damages can double or even triple.

*To The Justice Journal:*

*I read recently about a case in our town where several teens were arrested for vandalism. A 14-year-old's name was not published and was apparently sent to Juvenile Court, and the two older boys, 16 and 17, were treated like adults, with their names in the paper. Can you explain the difference in how they are being treated?*

*Juli Alberty*

Dear Juli,

Youngsters under the age of 16 are referred to the Juvenile Court for prosecution. Juvenile proceedings are sealed, and the names of the defendants as well as the charges are not public information. If one is "convicted" of a juvenile offense, it is referred to as an adjudication. It is not an adult criminal record. The theory behind the juvenile justice system is that it is therapeutic and rehabilitative rather than strictly punitive. Certain serious crimes can lead to prosecution as a "serious juvenile offender," and in some instances youngsters 14 and older who are accused of serious crimes can be transferred to the adult court. There the charges and the proceedings are public, and the youngster can be punished like an adult.

Because juvenile proceedings are conducted in a sealed courtroom, a youngster who opts for a trial is not entitled to have a jury hear the matter. A judge alone conducts trials. Despite that difference, all of

the other constitutional rights that adults would be afforded also apply in juvenile prosecutions, such as the right to an attorney, the right to not incriminate oneself, the right to a speedy trial, and the right to confront one's accusers.

Youngsters between the ages of 16 and 18 are eligible to be treated as "youthful offenders," a category similar to the juvenile proceeding. Although their names appear initially in the news, if permitted to be treated as youthful offenders the proceedings are sealed to the public as well. Convictions are referred to, again, as adjudications, and no adult record remains.

Both youthful offenders and juvenile offenders are subject to incarceration if the charges warrant it.

On a related matter, a bill that proposes raising the age of juvenile offenders to 18 is under discussion in the legislature. It would require a large capital investment to add facilities such as courtrooms and probation officers to deal with the increased juvenile population of 16- and 17-year-olds who are now treated as adults.

*Commentary and answers to your questions about legal issues will be provided by one of Connecticut's premiere trial attorneys, Richard T. Meehan Jr. of Bridgeport's Meehan, Meehan & Gavin (www.meehan-law.com). Meehan is a nationally certified criminal trial specialist and a charter fellow of the American Academy of Trial Counsel, as well as a former adjunct law professor. He has handled some of Connecticut's highest-profile criminal and civil cases. He can be seen as a law commentator on local and national TV, including CourtTV's The Best Defense with Jami Floyd, and Courtside with Ashleigh Banfield and Jack Ford. He is a frequent contributor to the blog, Cool Justice (www.cooljustice.blogspot.org). He writes a weekly column on legal issues for the Norwich Bulletin.*

*E-mail your questions to:*

*Dueprocess@thejusticejournal.com.*

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# Fear of Retribution—

(Continued from page 8)

person of interest.”

As for motive, again, Lt. Forlivio declined comment. “If I articulated on the motive, I’d be spelling out too close to home what I really think,” he said.

As for Rhonda’s family, her mother says it has been years since they have heard from police on the case. “Every day we would talk to police, and then it started dwindling, and then it was like nothing,” said Blanche.

Time has also taken Rhonda’s father, Zuberi Asim Ajamu, who died in 2006. His ashes are buried with his daughter, who rests with Co’ran nestled in her arms. Blanche still has her son, Rhonda’s brother, Bilal Hasan Ajamu of Stamford. Their extended family is readying for the arrival of a niece’s baby.

Blanche has been raising money for charitable purposes in memory of Rhonda and Co’ran’s names for different organizations. “This past year, I took

Rhonda’s and Co’ran’s pictures and put them on T-shirts and gave the proceeds to the youth department at my church, the Union Baptist Church,” she said. This year Blanche said she plans to raise money to help an underprivileged child go to summer camp.

The home that Rhonda grew up in was sold. Blanche moved to a new home where she continues to hold on to Rhonda’s teddy bears and scarves.

Blanche said, despite the passage of time, she continues to hold out hope for closure and justice, but she has come to

the realization that the matter is out of her hands and in God’s.

“I’m never going to give up hope, and I think that, indirectly, the Lord is working for me, because he’s keeping these people in jail,” she explained.

The Stamford Police Department’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation asks that you call their tip line, (203) 977-5111, if you have any information regarding this case. The line is monitored by Lt. John Forlivio and Capt. Richard Conklin.

(Contact Dawn at [d.miceli@thejusticejournal.com](mailto:d.miceli@thejusticejournal.com))

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