



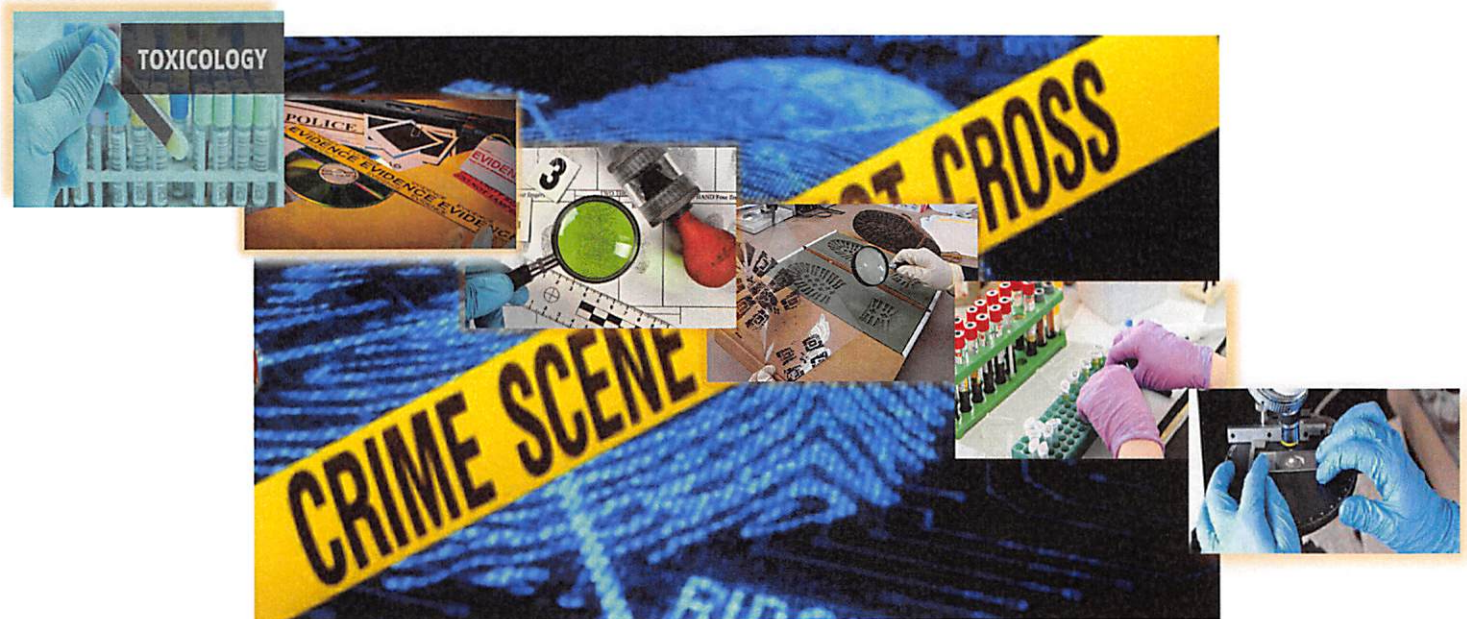
ISP FORENSIC SERVICES IMPACT REPORT 2022



This publication is intended to convey the essential value and impact the Idaho State Police Forensic Services (ISPFS) Laboratories bring to the criminal justice system in Idaho. All the cases highlighted in this newsletter are cases where ISPFS played a critical role by performing forensic analysis used in the criminal proceedings. Some analysis performed helped to convict individuals. Other forensic findings helped lead to exonerations. While the cases highlighted here were all published in major news media outlets, the majority of the cases worked on a daily basis are not published or publicized.

In 2022 ISPFS labs:

- Worked **15,699** cases, analyzed **28,624** items of evidence in support of local and state criminal justice agencies.
- Completed **657** DNA cases with **510** of those having a sexual assault kit.
- Completed controlled substance analysis on **14,865** samples.
- Idaho Cold Case and Advanced DNA Methods Team Completed **2** Cold Cases using Forensic Genealogy.



Timely forensic science analysis is vital to the success of the Idaho judicial system. Support from Idaho policymakers has been essential in the successes of the state laboratory system. The lab system employees will continue to work for Idaho citizens and other criminal justice stakeholders. Many new and ongoing forensic science initiatives will keep our Idaho lab system leading the country with innovative ideas.

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ADA COUNTY

Boise sex offender gets life in prison for 2020 rape

ISPFS performed biology screening and DNA on this case.

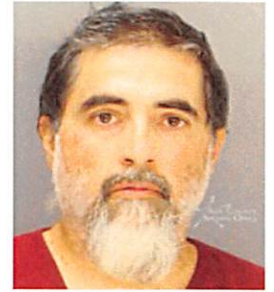
Prosecutors say 49-year-old Joel Guerrero forced his way into a woman's home, tied her up, and sexually assaulted her.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 9:32 AM MST March 4, 2022

Updated: 4:45 PM MST March 4, 2022

[Boise sex offender gets life in prison for 2020 rape | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)



Jose Guerrero
Ada County Sheriff

BOISE, Idaho — A 49-year-old Boise man was sentenced Thursday to life in prison without parole for raping a woman. Joel Guerrero attacked the victim at her house on April 27, 2020. According to the Ada County Prosecutor's Office, he forced his way into the home, tied the victim up, threatened her and repeatedly sexually assaulted her.

Guerrero was arrested weeks later and pleaded guilty to felony rape in January. Investigators say he has a lengthy criminal history, including previous convictions for aggravated assault in 1993, lewd conduct of a minor in 1995, and witness intimidation in 2012. Guerrero was required to register as a sex offender after the lewd conduct conviction.

As he handed down the sentence, Ada County District Judge Jason D. Scott said "society cannot tolerate the substantial risk that you will reoffend in this sort of way again."

Additional charges of forcible penetration and kidnapping, as well as a pending video voyeurism case, were dismissed as part of a plea deal.

"I want to thank the victim in this case for her courage and bravery throughout the court process," said Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts. "Thank you also to the Boise Police detectives who investigated this case, which helped my office ensure justice was served."

Driver who caused crash that killed man near Eagle sentenced for felony manslaughter

ISPFS performed toxicology testing in this case.

The driver, Cecilio Camacho-Montoya, was not authorized to be in the U.S. at the time of the crash that killed 22-year-old Connor Holcomb.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 11:32 AM MDT March 18, 2022

Updated: 11:52 AM MDT March 18, 2022

[Truck driver from Mexico sent to Idaho prison for fatal DUI crash | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)



Cecilio Eliut Camacho-Montoya / Ada County Jail

BOISE, Idaho — A man from Mexico faces up to 15 years in prison for causing a deadly crash in May of 2021 near Eagle.

Judge Steven Hippler on Wednesday sentenced Cecilio Camacho-Montoya, 34, to up to 15 years in prison, with 7 1/2 years fixed before he becomes eligible for parole. Also, his driver's license is suspended for life. At the time of the crash, Camacho-Montoya resided in Arizona, but was in the U.S. unlawfully. The Ada County Prosecutor's Office said he will be subject to deportation after his sentence is complete.

Camacho-Montoya pleaded guilty to felony vehicular manslaughter in November 2021 for the crash that killed 22-year-old Connor Holcomb. The crash occurred on May 19, 2021, at the intersection of Idaho highways 55 and 44.

Camacho-Montoya was driving under the influence of alcohol in a Freightliner semi-truck when he sped north through a red light on Highway 55, and collided with Holcomb's pickup truck. Holcomb later died on the day of the crash.

Field sobriety tests at the scene showed Camacho-Montoya had blood-alcohol content levels of 0.222 and 0.214 -- more than five times the legal limit of 0.04 for commercial drivers.

After Wednesday's sentencing, Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts said, "I express my deepest condolences to Connor's family, and I appreciate their strength during this case."

Bennetts also thanked the Ada Co. Sheriff's Office for their investigation of the crash.

Boise man shot during 2021 high-speed chase convicted of three felonies

ISPFS performed toxicology, controlled substance, and blood alcohol analysis in this case.

After trying to perform a standard traffic stop in July of 2021, BPD began pursuing 26-year-old Ezra Smith and he allegedly hit officers' vehicles with the van.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 1:28 PM MDT March 31, 2022

Updated: 6:45 PM MDT March 31, 2022

[Boise man shot in 2021 high-speed chase convicted | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)



BOISE, Idaho — A Boise man who was shot and injured during a high-speed chase with the Boise Police Department (BPD) in July of 2021 was convicted of three felonies on Thursday after a two-day trial.

A news release from Ada County Prosecuting Attorney, Jan M. Bennetts, said the jury convicted 26-year-old Ezra Smith on counts of aggravated battery upon certain law enforcement personnel, aggravated assault upon certain law enforcement personnel and a deadly weapon enhancement.

According to a press release from the Boise Police Department last summer, Smith was driving a stolen van. After trying to perform a standard traffic stop, the release said, police began pursuing Smith and he allegedly hit officers' vehicles with the van. "As officers attempted to take the suspect into custody an officer-involved shooting occurred," the release said.

The incident was first reported to police when a caller reported a reckless or possibly drunk driver in a moving van on Overland Road near Cole Road in Boise. When officers tried to pull over the driver, he swerved into the police cars and fled.

Police initially ended the chase due to the driver's recklessness and high rate of speed.

Smith was shot by police when officers tried to get him into custody. Officers performed first-aid on Smith until paramedics arrived and transported him to a nearby hospital. The Boise man filed a civil claim on Jan. 10 with the City of Boise and BPD, claiming he was shot and injured while unarmed during the high-speed chase and asked for \$1.27 million. The claim stated police used excessive force and malpractice against Smith.

Last week, Smith pled guilty to felonies of grand theft, eluding a police officer in a motor vehicle, driving under the influence, possession of a controlled substance and a misdemeanor of attempted petit theft.

Smith was charged on all the crimes in relation to the case, according to the Ada County Prosecuting Attorney's news release. Smith's sentencing is June 7 before Ada County District Judge Derrick O'Neill.

Woman sentenced for 2020 murder at Boise hotel

ISPFS performed firearms, biology screening and DNA analyses in this case.

Eava June-McCarthy will serve at least 18 years in prison before she can apply for parole.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 2:35 PM MDT August 12, 2022; Updated: 6:45 PM MDT August 12, 2022

[Woman sentenced for murdering man in 2020 in Boise hotel | ktvb.com](#)



Eava June-McCarthy
Ada County Jail

BOISE, Idaho — A Nampa woman who killed a man in October 2020 during an attempted robbery in a Boise hotel room is going to prison for first-degree murder.

Eava June-McCarthy, 20, was sentenced Friday to life in prison, with 18 years fixed, for the death of Gamaliel Nava. June-McCarthy in March 2022 pleaded guilty to first-degree murder. As part of the plea agreement, prosecutors dropped a charge of destruction of evidence.

June-McCarthy stabbed Nava in the eye and shot him in a hotel room near Boise Towne Square. After the attack, Boise Police said Nava was found in the hallway with gunshot and stab wounds. Nava, who was 42 years old, was pronounced dead after being taken to the hospital.

After June-McCarthy's arrest, a deputy prosecutor said she told other people that she killed Garzon as revenge for raping her when she was younger. Investigators did not find any information or evidence to support the rape claim. June-McCarthy will become eligible for possible parole after serving 18 years of her life sentence. Ada County District Judge Michael Reardon presided over this case, including Friday's sentencing.

Idaho woman convicted of first-degree murder

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis, biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.

Josina Regan, 46, was convicted of first-degree murder, along with eight other charges, for the October 2020 killing of John K. Baker.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 4:06 PM MDT April 12, 2022

Updated: 4:22 PM MDT April 12, 2022

[Boise woman convicted of first degree murder | ktvb.com](#)



Josina Regan
Ada County Jail

BOISE, Idaho — After an eight-day trial, Josina Regan, 46, was convicted of first-degree murder on Monday, along with eight other charges.

Regan was accused of shooting and killing John K. Baker, 52, in his Boise residence in October of 2020.

On the morning of October 22, 2020, officers were called to a home on North Ancestor Avenue at approximately 4 a.m. to respond to a report of a medical emergency. Once at the home, they found a man with gunshot wounds who died at the scene. Regan originally told officers she had found the victim shot when she showed up at the residence but later confessed she had shot the man three times in the chest. Following his death, Regan committed additional crimes including preparing false evidence by editing data on her cell phone and stealing items from Baker's residence.

Regan was convicted on 9 of the 10 counts against her:

- first-degree murder
- preparing false evidence
- possession of a controlled substance

- conspiracy to possess a controlled substance
- grand theft
- conspiracy to commit grand theft
- three misdemeanors for possession of a controlled substance, conspiracy to possess a controlled substance, and possession of drug paraphernalia

The jury acquitted Regan on the charge of intimidating a witness. Regan has been held in the Ada County Jail on a \$1 million bond since October of 2020. Her sentencing is scheduled for July 11, at 8:30 a.m. in the Ada County District Court. "Thank you to the jury for their time and attention to this case," Ada County Prosecutor, Jan Bennetts said. "Thank you also to the Boise Police detectives for their hard work on this investigation."

Boise man gets 40 years for murder during robbery gone wrong

ISPFS performed latent print, biology screening, controlled substance, and DNA analysis in this case.

The family of the victim, 24-year-old Guy Lopez II, described him as a kind, loving person with big plans.

Author: Katie Terhune

Published: 10:28 AM MDT April 18, 2022

Updated: 4:11 PM MDT April 18, 2022

[Boise man gets 40 years for murder | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)

BOISE, Idaho — A Boise man was sentenced Monday morning to 40 years in prison for shooting a 24-year-old to death during a robbery gone wrong near the Boise State campus last year.

Matthew Allen Crawford, 23, will be eligible for parole after serving 15 years of that sentence.

Prosecutors say Crawford and another man, 24-year-old Devoune Mosley, made plans to meet up with the victim in March 2021 outside his home on Chrisway Drive under the guise of purchasing Xanax from him. Instead, prosecutors say, Crawford brought a gun to the meetup with the intention to hide until Guy Lopez II got into the car, then attack him from behind, knock him unconscious, and take the drugs.

The plan went awry, however, when Lopez fought back. The victim was able to get distance from Crawford and drew his own gun, firing a single shot. Crawford then shot back multiple times, hitting and fatally wounding Lopez.

In a victim impact statement, Lopez' mother Elisa Reyes said she was haunted by the thought of her son bleeding on the ground as his killer fled. "They just left him there on the street like an animal, to die by himself," she said. "He took his life and didn't even care about him."

She described her son as intelligent and kind, the type of person who never hung up from a phone call without first telling her he loved her. Because of his murder, Reyes said, Lopez will never get the chance to get married or have children of his own.

"He was just starting out his life, and I was so very proud of him. Although he was a man, I still considered him my baby," she said. "This was not supposed to happen. I did not expect him to die before me."

Lopez' fiancée Audrey Wilcox and his father Guy Lopez also spoke before the sentence was handed down, with the victim's father urging Crawford to make something of himself in prison and dedicate his life to making up for the hurt he had inflicted.

"I wouldn't wish this kind of pain and emptiness on anyone, not even you," he said.

Crawford and Mosley were arrested later that night after leading officers on a car chase.

Crawford pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in February; Mosley has pleaded not guilty and is set to appear in court Wednesday.

Judge Nancy Baskin told Crawford that although she did not believe he had set off to Lopez' home that night with the intention to kill him, it was a "faulty plan to even attempt this."

Crawford was under the influence of alcohol, cocaine, and Xanax that night, and was a regular Fentanyl user, the judge said. Baskin also told Crawford that he had multiple opportunities to abandon the plan entirely or leave his gun behind.

Former Idaho lawmaker convicted of raping intern

ISPFS performed biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.

Aaron von Ehlinger faces up to life in prison at his July sentencing.

Author: Katie Terhune

Published: 9:56 AM MDT April 29, 2022

Updated: 5:38 PM MDT April 29, 2022

[Former Idaho representative convicted of raping intern | ktvb.com](#)

BOISE, Idaho — A former Idaho state representative was convicted Friday of raping a 19-year-old Capitol intern during the 2021 legislative session.

Aaron von Ehlinger, 39, will be required to register as a sex offender and faces up to life in prison at his July 28 sentencing. The jury returned a guilty verdict for felony rape after about eleven hours of deliberation, finding von Ehlinger not guilty on a separate charge of forcible penetration. Von Ehlinger's face betrayed no emotion as the verdict was read, but as he was placed in handcuffs and led by a deputy out of the courtroom, sweat trickled down his neck.

In the gallery, several people embraced. One woman began to cry quietly. Prosecutors Katelyn Farley and Whitney Welsh rose and strode from the room, then hugged one another in the courthouse lobby.

Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts said after the verdict was handed down that she hopes the conviction helps to tear down the barriers faced by victims of sexual assault. "It is incredibly important to show victims that you can come forward and that you will be believed," Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts said after the verdict, adding that the intern, Jane Doe, showed "remarkable" courage. "I am really proud of her," she added. The young woman told police that von Ehlinger raped her in his downtown Boise apartment after the pair went out to dinner together March 9, 2021. The representative penetrated her with his finger, pinned her down, and forced her to perform oral sex, she reported, despite her saying "no" and telling him that she did not want to do it and that he was hurting her.

Jane Doe told her mother and another employee at the Statehouse what had happened, reported the rape to police, and received a sexual assault exam two days later.

Von Ehlinger, a Republican from Latah County, resigned his seat in the Idaho House the next month after a legislative ethics committee found that he had committed "conduct unbecoming a representative" in his sexual pursuit of the intern and several other women who worked at the Statehouse.

He took the stand in his own defense Thursday, testifying that the sexual encounter had been consensual and that the 19-year-old was a willing participant. "She never told me no," von Ehlinger said.

Boise man gets 20-to-life for conspiracy to deliver fentanyl, traffic heroin

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Mason Yant was arrested in September 2021 after a nine-hour standoff with police in Nampa overnight. On Wednesday, Yant was sentenced to up to life in prison.

Author: KTVB Staff

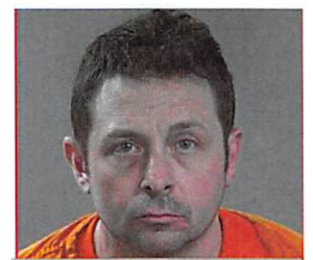
Published: 2:39 PM MDT May 27, 2022

Updated: 2:39 PM MDT May 27, 2022

[Boise man sentenced to 20 years to life for fentanyl and heroin | ktvb.com](#)



Aaron von Ehlinger
Ada County Sheriff's Office



Mason Yant
Canyon County Sheriff

BOISE, Idaho — A 42-year-old Boise man was sentenced Wednesday to up to life in prison with 20 years fixed before parole eligibility, for manufacturing and distributing fentanyl and trafficking in heroin.

Mason Yant was arrested in September 2021 after an overnight standoff with police in Nampa that stretched on for more than nine hours.

At the time of the incident, officers with Boise Police and Nampa Police went to a house in the 600 block of Lone Star Road after receiving information that Yant was there. The warrant was related to an investigation on Yant for conspiracy to traffic heroin, meth and cocaine, as well as distributing fentanyl. Yant also violated his parole from a 2017 drug trafficking case.

The Nampa Police Tactical Response Team responded to the address to negotiate with the occupants. After midnight, two people came out and surrendered, but Yant refused to leave the residence, officials said.

During the nine-hour standoff, Yant fired a firearm toward at least four responding officers. No officers were injured during the September 2021 incident and Yant was ultimately taken into custody. Yant pled guilty to conspiracy to traffic heroin, conspiracy to deliver and manufacture a controlled substance and unlawful possession of a firearm in March 2022.

According to the Ada County Prosecuting Attorney, illegal controlled substances and other contraband were seized during the investigation. Investigators found more than 4 kilograms (8.8 pounds) of powder fentanyl, 5,000 grams (11 pounds) of fentanyl pills disguised as fake Oxycontin and 200 grams (.44 pounds) of heroin.

The amount of meth and cocaine seized was equal to trafficking weight, according to Friday's news release. Investigators also seized 11 firearms and more than \$20,000.

Ada County District Judge Peter Barton sentenced Yant to serve up to life in prison, with 20 years fixed before parole eligibility.

The prosecuting attorney said eight other people were also charged as a result of the investigation.

"Those looking to distribute illegal, dangerous drugs in our community should be deterred by this sentence Judge Barton handed down," Ada County Prosecutor, Jan Bennetts said. "This investigation led by Boise Police and Nampa Police detectives undoubtedly removed hundreds of doses of dangerous and deadly drugs from our community. These partnerships are crucial in our mission of public safety."

Boise man sentenced to 33 years for robbery in connection to murder

ISPFS performed latent print, biology screening, DNA, and controlled substance analysis in this case.

The man was sentenced for conspiring to rob someone who was killed during the attempted robbery in March of 2021.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 5:52 PM MDT June 30, 2022

Updated: 5:52 PM MDT June 30, 2022

[Boise man sentenced 33 years for robbery in connection to murder | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com/news/local-news/boise-man-sentenced-33-years-for-robbery-in-connection-to-murder)



BOISE, Idaho - 24-year-old Devoune Mosley was sentenced to serve up to 33 years in prison for conspiring to rob Guy Lopez II, who was killed during the attempted robbery, on Thursday.

On March 15, 2021, Mosley was the driver of a getaway vehicle used to flee the scene of the attempted robbery turned murder. Mosley and Matthew Allen Crawford made plans to meet up with Lopez outside his home on Chrisway Drive under the guise of purchasing Xanax from him. Instead, prosecutors say, Crawford brought a gun to the meetup with the intention to hide until Lopez got into the car, then attack him from behind, knock him unconscious, and take the drugs. The plan went awry, however, when Lopez fought back. The victim was

able to get distance from Crawford and drew his own gun, firing a single shot. Crawford then shot back multiple times, hitting and fatally wounding Lopez.

Boise police officers saw Mosley and Crawford running away, shortly after the shooting, and were arrested.

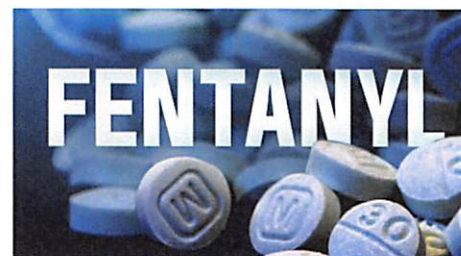
In April 2022, Mosley pled guilty to commit robbery and, as part of a plea agreement, the remaining charges of first-degree murder, and unlawful possession of a firearm by a convicted felon were dropped. Mosley was sentenced to 33 years, with eligibility for parole after 13 years.

"Those who conspire to commit crimes with others will be held accountable for their actions. Ensuring justice in this case was made possible by the work done from the Boise Police patrol officers and detectives who investigated this case," said Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts. "I, again, extend my deepest condolences to Mr. Lopez's family and friends."

In April, Crawford was sentenced to 40 years of prison, with eligibility for parole after 15 years, for second-degree murder.

Idaho man sentenced to prison for distributing oxycodone containing fentanyl

ISPFS performed controlled substance and fingerprint analysis in this case.



Staff EastIdahoNews.com
Posted: Jul 5, 2022, 7:04 pm

[Idaho man sentenced to prison for distributing oxycodone containing fentanyl - East Idaho News](#)

BOISE – On Friday, Dakota James Hoffman, 29, of Bellevue, was sentenced to 48 months in federal prison for distribution of fentanyl, U.S. Attorney Josh Hurwit announced.

According to court records, Hoffman distributed oxycodone pills to a man with the initials A.K. who overdosed on fentanyl on April 2, 2020. A review of A.K.'s digital communications revealed that Hoffman had distributed oxycodone pills to A.K. approximately two weeks prior to the overdose. A subsequent investigation revealed that the oxycodone pills contained fentanyl. Additional investigation into Hoffman uncovered a separate incident where he distributed a fake oxycodone pill containing fentanyl to another individual that resulted in a non-fatal overdose. For his distribution, Hoffman was charged with distributing fentanyl, and he pleaded guilty on March 1, 2022.

U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson of the Eastern District of Arkansas, sitting by designation, imposed the sentence and ordered Hoffman to serve three years of supervised release to follow his incarceration. Hoffman was further ordered to pay restitution to the family of A.K.

U.S. Attorney Hurwit commended the cooperative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bellevue Marshals Office. Their investigation of this matter led to the successful prosecution of this case.

"Fentanyl is unlike any other drug threat we have faced," Hurwit said. "No part of our nation has been able to escape from the spread of this poison. We must continue to speak out to make sure all Idahoans know about the threat of fentanyl-related overdose and poisoning. And we will hold accountable those who risk the lives of others by distributing this deadly drug."

Only two milligrams of fentanyl is considered a potentially lethal dose, and it's particularly dangerous for someone who does not have a tolerance to opioids. According to the CDC, 107,375 people in the United States died of drug overdoses and drug poisonings in the 12-month period ending in January 2022. Such deaths are now the leading cause of death for adults aged 18-45, and a staggering 67 percent of those deaths involved synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Some of these deaths were attributed to fentanyl mixed with other illicit drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin, with many users unaware they were actually taking fentanyl.

BANNOCK COUNTY

Pocatello man accused of raping teen who was on acid

The lab performed toxicology, biology screening, and DNA analysis. As mentioned in the article there was a CODIS hit to the named suspect in the case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Feb 11, 2022, 2:30 pm

[Pocatello man accused of raping teen who was on acid - East Idaho News](#)

Editor's note: this story contains details that may be disturbing to some readers. Discretion is advised.

POCATELLO — A man who had been linked to sex crimes involving a teen for over a year was arrested last week after he was allegedly found in possession of marijuana. Wade William Denny, 35, has been charged with felonies for sexual battery of a minor and statutory rape in connection to an alleged attack that occurred in 2020, according to charge documents. Additionally, he has been charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver and introducing contraband to a correction facility — all felonies.



Wade William Denny
Bannock County Jail

Around 8:30 p.m. on Aug. 5, 2020, officers from the Pocatello Police Department were called to the 1900 block of South 4th Avenue following a 911 call, an affidavit of probable cause says. The caller, a 16-year-old girl, told dispatchers that she was scared of everyone on the street. Officers spoke with the teen, noting that her paranoia, perspiration and light sensitivity appeared to be signs of drug use.

While they took her to Portneuf Medical Center, the girl told officers that she had been “sold out” by Denny, according to the affidavit. She said Denny had given her acid and raped her. A rape kit was administered at Portneuf and sent to the Idaho State Police forensic services for analysis.

The following day, officers spoke with the grandmother of the victim, who told officers her granddaughter had been given acid, causing her to lose consciousness. When the teen regained consciousness, the grandmother told officers, the pants she had been wearing had been removed and her bra felt as if it had been removed and put back on incorrectly. The victim’s grandmother told officers that Denny and an unknown number of others had been present during the assault. Officers tried to set a forensic interview with the victim, but the grandmother declined, the affidavit says, asking the officers to cease all contact with the teen.

Just over a month later, on Sept. 10, 2020, a forensic toxicology report of a urine sample taken the night of the attack returned a positive for carboxy THC, amphetamine, methamphetamine and lorazepam, according to the affidavit.

Then in December 2020, a forensic biology report from the rape kit returned male DNA from swabs of multiple body parts, the affidavit reads. The DNA collected was entered into the combined DNA Index System (CODIS) to be tested against all profiles gathered. On June 22, 2021, the DNA returned a match to Denny. A no-contact order was issued for Denny and the victim that June. According to court documents, the order was issued for Denny providing shelter to a runaway child. Denny was not arrested until Feb. 2, when Pocatello police responded to a 911 call around 6:30 p.m. about a verbal disturbance on the 1400 block of Quinn Road. Responding officers found Denny inside a car. The victim of the attack in 2020 was inside with him. He was taken into custody for violating a no-contact order, and his vehicle was searched. Officers found a backpack containing a glass jar and ice cream container, both filled with marijuana. Police said they also found a scale. Denny was transported to Bannock County Jail and booked for possession of a controlled substance with intent to deliver, as well as violating a no-contact order.

Officers who investigated the original alleged sexual attack contacted jail deputies the following day to add statutory rape and sexual battery to Wade's booking offenses. He has also been charged with possession of marijuana and introducing contraband into a correctional facility for an arrest that occurred in June 2021. In that incident, Pocatello police found him in possession of marijuana. When he was arrested and booked, several tabs of LSD were found in his wallet. Denny is being held at Bannock County Jail on an aggregate bond of \$106,000. If he is found guilty, Denny would face up to life in prison for statutory rape, and another potential life sentence possession with intent to deliver. He would also face up to 40 and a half years for additional charges, which include the misdemeanor for violating a no-contact order. Denny is scheduled to appear in court before magistrate judge Thomas Clark for a preliminary hearing on Tuesday.

Update:

Plea agreement covers some of the numerous charges against Pocatello man

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Jul 25, 2022, 10:32 am

[Plea agreement covers some of the numerous charges against Pocatello man - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A recently reached plea agreement would settle some of the 10 felonies a Pocatello man is facing.

Wade William Denny, 35, has agreed to plead guilty to the manufacturing and delivery of a controlled substance, according to court records. In exchange, the Bannock County Prosecutor's Office will dismiss an additional charge of possessing a controlled substance with the intent to deliver.

Denny was arrested in February following an investigation into an alleged sexual battery of a then-16-year-old girl. When he was arrested, Pocatello police officers found him in a vehicle with the same girl, with whom he was ordered to avoid all contact.

Police received a 911 call from the girl in August 2020. She said that she had been "sold out" by Denny. Responding officers noted that the girl appeared to be on a narcotic and took her to the hospital, where a rape kit was administered. Medical staff also collected a sample for forensic analysis. That sample returned positives for carboxy THC, amphetamine, methamphetamine and lorazepam. The girl told officers she received the drugs from Denny.

Since then, Denny has been charged with possession with intent to deliver, manufacturing for delivery, possession and conveying contraband into a prison. Most recently, he was charged with four felony charges for intimidating a witness and 20 misdemeanor charges for violating a no-contact order after he called a child and attempted to persuade them not to give investigators information.

The possession and conveyance charges have since been dismissed. As part of his July 12 plea agreement, which does not include any settled sentence, Denny has also agreed to pay restitution, the amount of which will be determined in court.

Second Pocatello brother linked to June armed robbery reaches plea agreement

ISPFS performed fingerprint and firearms analysis in this case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime Watch Posted: Mar 25, 2022, 1:02 pm

[Second Pocatello brother linked to June armed robbery reaches plea agreement - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — The second of two brothers charged with, among other felonies, a June 24 armed robbery in Pocatello, has reached a plea deal.

Micole Johnathan Hamilton, 24, has agreed to plead guilty to a felony charge of grand theft and a persistent violator enhancement. In exchange, two counts of robbery will be amended to felonies for being a principal to robbery. Additionally, a second count of grand theft will be dismissed, as will a second persistent violator enhancement.

For the charges included in the agreement, which do not include one count of attempted murder, Hamilton will receive a prison sentence of 11 to 15 years. This sentence, though, will be served concurrently with all other Bannock County charges, including the attempted murder.

Both Micole and his older brother, 26-year-old Nathen Jay Hamilton, were arrested in July after an investigation by Pocatello Police connected them to a robbery at a US Bank ATM. Officers first tried to speak with the brothers on June 25, the day after the robbery. But when officers arrived at their home, one of the brothers, later identified as Nathen, ran into the home as the other, later identified as Micole, got away in a car while firing a handgun at pursuing officers.

As one of the officers involved in Nathen's arrest on June 29 told EastIdahoNews.com at the time, officers discontinued their pursuit once their efforts were deemed unsafe to the officers and community. Micole was arrested the day after Nathen. Officers stopped Micole while he was driving a stolen vehicle. Both men also charged in



Micole Jonathan Hamilton
Bannock County Jail



Nathen Jay Hamilton
Bannock County Jail

connection to numerous other crimes, including vehicle thefts, grand thefts and, in Micole's case, attempted murder for firing at the officers. While the attempted murder charge was not included in the existing plea agreement, a change-of-plea hearing has been scheduled for him, according to court records.

Micole also reached a previous agreement, which saw him plead guilty to receiving or transferring a stolen vehicle. As part of that agreement, an attached persistent violator enhancement was dismissed.

Nathen also reached plea deals that covers all his charges. He was sentenced to spend nine to 15 years in prison.

As part of the numerous deals, the Hamilton brothers have agreed to jointly pay restitution for the stolen and damaged vehicles and items. A restitution amount has yet to be determined.

In addition to the charges in Bannock County, Micole also faces charges of grand theft in Twin Falls County, and grand theft and conspiracy to commit grand theft in Jerome County. Both cases await resolution in Bannock County before they can proceed.

Two men enter guilty pleas to drug trafficking conspiracy

ISPFS performed fingerprint and firearms analysis in this case.

EastIdahoNews.com staff

Crime Watch Posted: Apr 4, 2022, 8:30 pm

[Two men enter guilty pleas to drug trafficking conspiracy - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A Murtaugh man and a Pocatello man pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance.

Between January 1 and March 24, 2021, Antonio Verduzco-Arreola, 40, of Murtaugh, and Joseph Alexander Huber, 35, of Pocatello, entered into an agreement to distribute controlled substances in the Pocatello area.

On March 21, 2021, two pounds of methamphetamine was abandoned in a Pocatello hotel room rented by Verduzco-Arreola. On March 24, 2021, Pocatello Police officers conducted surveillance near the hotel in Pocatello. Officers observed Huber meet with both Verduzco-Arreola and a third co-defendant. Verduzco-Arreola was later contacted by law enforcement and found in possession of 439 grams of counterfeit oxycodone that contained fentanyl. When Huber was arrested on April 30, 2021, police officers found 82 grams of methamphetamine in Huber's possession and 167 grams of methamphetamine in his hotel room. On March 29, 2022, Verduzco-Arreola pleaded guilty to entering into an agreement with his co-defendants to distribute fentanyl. Verduzco-Arreola is scheduled to be sentenced on June 14, 2022, before Chief U.S. District Judge David C. Nye and faces a maximum penalty of life in federal prison. On March 30, 2022, Huber pleaded guilty to entering into an agreement with his co-defendants to distribute methamphetamine. Huber is scheduled to be sentenced on July 25, 2022, before Chief Judge Nye and faces a maximum penalty of 40 years in federal prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. U.S. Attorney Rafael M. Gonzalez, Jr., of the District of Idaho made the announcement and commended the cooperative efforts of the Pocatello Police Department, Idaho State Police, and the Drug Enforcement Administration, which led to charges.

'You are a real threat to society.' Man known as 'Sunday Bandit' sentenced to prison for indecent exposure

ISPFS performed DNA analysis in the 2014 case listed in this article.

Andrea Olson, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime Watch Posted: Apr 4, 2022, 6:30 pm

['You are a real threat to society.' Man known as 'Sunday Bandit' sentenced to prison for indecent exposure - East Idaho News](#)

REXBURG — A man known by neighbors as the “Sunday Bandit” was sentenced to prison on Monday for felony indecent exposure. Cody Polatis, 27, admitted to exposing himself to three little girls on July 12 last year at the Warm Slough boat area in Madison County.

Seventh District Judge Steven Boyce sentenced Polatis two and a half years fixed time in prison followed by an indeterminate term of four years. He is also required to register as a sex offender. “You have demonstrated that you are a real threat to society and to this community,” Boyce told Polatis during the hearing. “The real concern I have, Mr. Polatis, is it does just seem to be a pattern of escalation here.”

The state recommended Polatis serve a rider with an underlying sentence of six years total in prison. Madison County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Mckinzie Cole argued that Polatis has had several opportunities for treatment and that he has not taken advantage of them.

“This case your honor is about three little girls. Those little girls have names. They have families,” Cole said. “They were innocent children who were playing outside thinking that they were safe until Mr. Polatis sought them out. He watched them, he waited until the adult that was with them briefly walked to her car to put some belongings away and then pounced on them. And when the adult wasn't there, he walked up to these children and exposed himself.” According to court documents, the girls were catching frogs in the river when Polatis approached them.

The state argued that Polatis has a lengthy criminal history that dates back to 2014 which includes trespassing, breaking into people's homes, and exposing himself. EastIdahoNews.com first began reporting on Polatis in 2016. Neighbors in his tightknit Salem community gave him the nickname of “Sunday Bandit” after he was

caught several times breaking into homes while they were at church. One neighbor set up a hidden camera in his daughter's bedroom that caught Polatis masturbating and stealing the girl's clothes. The neighbor believed Polatis had broken in at least seven times and stolen \$1,300 worth of women's clothing.

Other incidents involving Polatis include:

2014: A trespassing charge after Polatis was found in the Rexburg Kmart dressing room after hours with women's clothing. He pleaded guilty and was ordered to undergo a psychosexual evaluation.

2016: An unlawful entry and probation violation charge after a teenage girl, home sick from church, found Polatis in her Salem home. On a voluntary admission form, he wrote, "I went in and intended to masturbate and leave. I did not intend on taking anything."

2016: Polatis was arrested for indecent exposure after he admitted to masturbating and looking at pornography outside a Rexburg surgical center. Officers discovered women's underwear in the vehicle, and workers said he had used their internet in the past.

2018: A woman returned from church and discovered Polatis' car parked outside her Salem home. Her daughter's bed was disheveled, and Polatis told her "his animals had recently died, and he came to her house to see her animals." He is charged with misdemeanor unlawful entry and violating probation. Polatis was sentenced to serve time in jail.

2019: Polatis pleaded guilty to misdemeanor petty theft. He was ordered to serve up to a year in jail.

The father of one of the victims at the river spoke during the sentencing hearing. "As someone who believes in God, I forgive him (Cody) but your honor, I just hope and plead that the sentence that is rendered is one that provides justice and one that will protect the community going forward and in that sentence, Mr. Polatis can get help," the father said. "We need some justice. We need some sort of measure that this kind of thing won't be tolerated."

Trent Grant, Polatis's attorney, listed different treatment options for Polatis and mentioned the psychosexual evaluation that was administered to his client before the sentencing. Those evaluations are not made public. "This was an incident that occurred because Cody was feeling impulsive and it happened to be that the kids were there ... That does not downplay what happened here. I am not trying to do that but the data, the psychosexual evaluation, indicates that Cody has no history of sexual interest in children or has no background in any behavior involving children," Grant said. "Cody recognizes a need for treatment and a desire to put this behavior and this thought process behind him."

Polatis apologized to the families and children involved. "I realize this has been something that has affected them," he said. "I do have a problem and I notice that and it needs to be worked on...I don't want to continue this behavior. It's bothered me to the fact that what I have done to these little girls and that's something I get to live with the rest of my life, no matter what. Even though there was no touching or anything like that, it still has bothered me."



Cody Polatis
Madison County Jail

Pocatello man gets probation for robbery, grand theft, possession of stolen bank card

ISPFS performed controlled substance and fingerprint analyses in this case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime watch posted: Jul 29, 2022, 7:04 am

[Pocatello man gets probation for robbery, grand theft, possession of stolen bank card - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A man who pleaded guilty to four felonies has been sentenced to five years of felony probation.

Ridge Alban Parsons, 31, entered guilty pleas to charges of robbery, grand theft and two counts of possession of a stolen bank card after reaching a plea agreement with the Bannock County Prosecutor's Office.

Parsons was arrested in March after he was accused of robbing a home on South 6th Avenue in Pocatello. Witnesses told officers that they returned to the home with its resident to find an armed Parsons in the living room demanding several items, including a motorcycle.



Ridge Alban Parsons
Bannock County Jail

Pocatello police officers and Bannock County Sheriff's deputies executed a search warrant at Parsons' home days later. Inside, they found a gun matching the description provided by the witness. The gun had been reported stolen.

Officers also found marijuana and prescription drugs prescribed to someone who did not live at the home. Several items, including IDs, checkbooks and credit cards, also belonging to people not living at the home, were found.

Initially, Parsons was charged with felony charges of robbery, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, two counts of grand theft and two counts of fraud by possessing a stolen bank card. Prosecutors also added a deadly weapon enhancement.

Per his plea deal, one grand theft charge, the possession of a firearm charge and the enhancement were dismissed. In addition to probation, Naftz ordered Parsons to pay \$2,257 in fees and fines.

Pocatello man convicted in federal court of trafficking meth and heroin

ISPFS performed controlled substance and fingerprint analysis in this case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime watch posted: Jun 11, 2022, 9:08 am

[Pocatello man convicted in federal court of trafficking meth and heroin - East Idaho News](#)

The following is a news release from the U.S. Department of Justice for the District of Idaho.

POCATELLO – After a four-day trial, a federal jury sitting in Pocatello found Adam Lee Vallely 46, of Pocatello, guilty of one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, one count of possession with the intent to distribute methamphetamine, and one count of possession with the intent to distribute heroin, U.S. Attorney Rafael M. Gonzalez, Jr. announced Friday.

Senior U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson, from the Eastern District of Arkansas, sitting by designation, presided over the trial, which began on June 6th and concluded with guilty verdicts on June 10th.

According to court records and evidence presented at trial, Vallely engaged in a drug trafficking conspiracy with others in southeast Idaho beginning in December 2017 to August 2018. Evidence established that Vallely participated in trafficking large quantities of methamphetamine and heroin from a Mexican source of supply. The evidence further established that Vallely had a source of supply in Salt Lake City that provided

methamphetamine and heroin, and that Vallely and his co-conspirators attempted to get large quantities of cocaine from the Salt Lake City source. During a search of the home where Vallely was known to reside in May 2018, law enforcement agents found methamphetamine, heroin, \$15,000.00 in United States currency, and a money counting machine. At the time of the search, Vallely was found hiding in an attic.

Conspiracy to distribute controlled substances is punishable by a minimum of 10 years and up to life in prison, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine is punishable by a minimum of 5 years up to forty years in prison, and possession with intent to distribute heroin is punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. Due to Vallely's criminal history record, he is subject to a 15-year mandatory minimum sentence. The conspiracy charge is also punishable by a fine of up to \$10 million and at least five years of supervised release. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Sentencing will be set before Senior U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson at the federal courthouse in Pocatello.

U.S. Attorney Rafael M. Gonzalez, Jr., commended the cooperative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco Firearms, and Explosives, the Idaho State Police, Pocatello Police Department, the Bannock County Sheriff's Office, the Blackfoot Police Department, the Bingham County Sheriff's Office, and the Idaho Department of Corrections which led to charges.

Woman who pleaded guilty to drug possession, four misdemeanors sent on rider

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime watch posted: Jun 18, 2022, 12:31 pm

[Woman who pleaded guilty to drug possession, four misdemeanors sent on rider - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A Pocatello woman arrested last August after crashing her SUV into a tree and fleeing the scene has been sent on a rider.

Court records show Megan Renee Housel, 27, was given an underlying prison sentence of three to seven years by District Judge Javier Gabiola. She could still serve that time if she fails to complete the rider.

The sentence comes after Housel reached a plea agreement with the Bannock County Prosecutor's Office. Per the agreement, she pleaded guilty to a felony for possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine) and misdemeanors for possession of marijuana, resisting arrest and two counts of theft. In exchange, a felony for the destruction of evidence, and misdemeanors for failing to report an accident, possession of paraphernalia and four counts of theft were all dismissed.



Megan Renee Housel
Bannock County Jail

Housel was arrested in August after officers with the Pocatello police responded to the scene of a single-vehicle crash and found an SUV registered to Housel lodged in a tree.

While searching the scene, officers saw a baggie containing what they believed to be methamphetamine through a window.

Housel returned to the scene while officers were there. According to police reports, while looking inside the vehicle for her documentation, Housel attempted to hide the baggie officers had seen through the window.

Officers found the baggie under the passenger seat. They also found marijuana and drug paraphernalia inside her purse. As they attempted to arrest Housel, she tried to pull away from them, resulting in the resisting arrest charge.

Court documents do not detail why Housel was charged with theft. Housel received a rider for the charge of meth possession. She received a sentence of 106 days time served for all other charges to which she pleaded guilty. She was ordered to pay \$2,622 in fees and fines.

Housel was also charged with a felony for possessing a controlled substance in Bingham County. She pleaded guilty to that charge and was ordered to pay \$1,197 in fees and fines. She was sentenced to time served in that case as well.

Idaho Falls man gets 15 years in prison for firing at police during high-speed chase

ISPFS performed firearms and controlled substance analyses in this case.

Kalama Hines, EASTIDAHONEWS.COM

Crime watch posted: Sep 11, 2022, 10:11 am: Updated: Sep 11, 2022, 10:16 am

[Idaho Falls man gets 15 years in prison for firing at police during high-speed chase - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A man who was found guilty of two felonies has been sentenced to a minimum of 15 years in prison.

Talon Scott Cavanaugh, 28, received 565 days of time served toward a sentence of 15 to 35 years in prison during a hearing last week, according to court records. This after he was found guilty of felony charges for aggravated assault and attempting to elude police officers, along with a persistent violator enhancement. Cavanaugh was wanted in connection with a Feb. 9, 2021 shooting in Ammon. An officer with the Chubbuck Police Department identified a vehicle Cavanaugh had been seen driving around 4 p.m. on Feb. 11. When the officer attempted to make a traffic stop, Cavanaugh continued driving at the legal speed.

He then leaned out the driver's side window of the vehicle and fired several shots from a handgun at the officer. The officer swerved away from the gunshots while ducking behind the engine block of their cruiser for cover. While the officer was ducked down and calling for assistance, Cavanaugh sped away, according to police reports. He reached speeds up to 115 mph on Hiline Road before getting to U.S. Highway 91 and increasing his speed to 125. After a lengthy police chase, Cavanaugh's vehicle eventually became disabled in a sage field in Fort Hall.

Officers from the Chubbuck and Fort Hall police departments searched the area, finding Cavanaugh hiding in sagebrush. He was administered Narcan to combat the effects of the drugs he had ingested in an attempt to conceal them. His original charges included a felony for destruction of evidence, but that charge was dismissed. A jury found him guilty of aggravated assault on an officer and attempting to elude an officer. He was also found guilty of enhancements for being a persistent violator and using a deadly weapon in the commission of a crime.

When he is released from prison, District Judge Javier Gabiola has ordered Cavanaugh's driver's license be suspended for three years. Cavanaugh has also been ordered to pay \$3,241 in fees and fines.



Talon Scott Cavanaugh
Bonneville County Jail

Man sentenced to prison for firing rifle inside camp trailer during robbery

ISPFS performed controlled substance and latent print analyses in this case.

EastIdahoNews.com Staff

Crime watch posted: Oct 11, 2022, 10:11 pm

[Man sentenced to prison for firing rifle inside camp trailer during robbery - East Idaho News](#)

The following is a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

POCATELLO — A Pocatello man was sentenced to ten years in federal prison for the discharge of a firearm during a robbery that occurred on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation on June 23, 2021.

According to court records, Jose Acosta, Jr., 41, entered a camping trailer and demanded money from a female occupant. The victim refused and fought with Acosta. During the struggle, Acosta fired a pump-action .22 caliber rifle multiple times. The female victim was treated for non-life-threatening injuries at a local hospital. Acosta fled the scene after the shooting and was arrested the next day after an extensive manhunt.

On Oct. 4, Acosta was sentenced to a mandatory term of ten years in federal prison by Senior District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill. Acosta was also ordered to serve a term of five years of supervised release once his sentence is completed.

U.S. Attorney Josh Hurwit, of the District of Idaho, made the announcement and commended the cooperative efforts of the Fort Hall Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bingham County Sheriff's Office, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the other assisting local agencies which led to charges.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

This case was handled by the U.S. Attorney Office's specially deputized Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (SAUSA), funded by the Eastern Idaho Partnership (EIP) and the State of Idaho. The EIP is a coalition of local city and county officials in eastern Idaho as well as the Idaho Department of Correction.

The EIP SAUSA program allows law enforcement to utilize the federal criminal justice system – through the EIP SAUSA – to prosecute, convict, and sentence violent, armed criminals and drug traffickers. These criminals often receive stiffer penalties than they might in state courts.

This program was created in January 2016. Since that time, approximately 199 defendants have been indicted by the EIP SAUSA. Of these defendants, 27 have been indicted on firearms-related charges. The defendants indicted under the program have been sentenced to 8,892 months (approximately 741 years) in federal prison, representing an average prison sentence of 54.55 months (4.54 years). Defendants indicted for firearms-related offenses serve, on average, approximately 41.68 months (3.5 years) in federal prison.

BINGHAM COUNTY

Jury convicts man involved in high-speed chase

ISPFS performed blood alcohol and controlled substance analysis in this case.

EastIdahoNews.com staff

Posted: Mar 28, 2022, 8:41 am

[Jury convicts man involved in high-speed chase - East Idaho News](#)

Following a two-day trial, a jury convicted Marcus Kurt Yupe on March 1 of two counts of aggravated assault on law enforcement personnel, eluding a police officer and possession of fentanyl. Yupe was also convicted of being a persistent violator, a sentencing enhancement that carries a mandatory minimum prison term of five years and a maximum term of life.



Marcus Yupe
Bingham County Jail

The charges arose from an incident on May 8, which began in the city of Blackfoot. A Blackfoot police officer attempted to stop a pickup truck being driven by Yupe due to its fictitious and suspended license plates. Yupe fled the officer, reaching speeds of 70 miles per hour in a residential neighborhood where the posted speed limit was 25 miles per hour.

Ahead of the pursuit, Corporal Lawrence Henrie and Deputy Brook Ferro of the Bingham County Sheriff's Office deployed a "spike strip" device across Shilling Avenue just prior to a bridge spanning the Blackfoot River. Henrie controlled the spike strip from a position on the opposite side of the road from Yupe and Ferro stood just off the roadway near a marked patrol vehicle. Yupe drove directly towards Henrie and Ferro, prompting Henrie to open fire on the truck. Henrie's shots struck the driver's side of the pickup truck, but Yupe continued driving. Both deputies narrowly avoided being hit by the truck; it passed within two feet of Henrie and within approximately ten feet of Ferro.

The pursuit continued for approximately eleven minutes. Blackfoot officers and Bingham County deputies apprehended Yupe once his truck became inoperative due to driving on tires that had been punctured by Henrie's spike strip. After Yupe was taken into custody, a Blackfoot officer located pills on his person which were later determined to contain fentanyl. Yupe had not been prescribed the pills.

The Bingham County Prosecutor's Office charged Yupe with aggravated assault on Henrie, aggravated assault on Ferro, a felony count of eluding, a felony count of unlawful possession of a controlled substance, driving under the influence, resisting and obstructing, and the persistent violator sentencing enhancement. The DUI and resisting and obstructing charges were dropped by the Prosecutor's Office prior to trial. The case was tried by Janet Franklin, a deputy prosecuting attorney for Bingham County. Sentencing is set before the Honorable Darren B. Simpson on April 25.

Blackfoot man gets plea deals covering 26 charges and two counties

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Kalama Hines, EastIdahoNews.com

Crime watch posted: Oct 10, 2022, 3:34 pm

[Blackfoot man gets plea deals covering 26 charges and two counties - East Idaho News](#)

POCATELLO — A man originally facing a total of 40 charges has reached plea agreements in Bannock and Bingham counties.

Cody Gene Anson, 30, has agreed to plead guilty to five charges — three felonies and two misdemeanors — in Bannock County, court records show. He has already pleaded



Cody Gene Anson
Bingham County

guilty to another four felonies in Bingham County. In exchange, 13 other felonies and four misdemeanors will be dismissed between the two counties.

Court documents show that Anson will admit to felonies for domestic battery, witness intimidation and attempted strangulation and misdemeanors for second-degree stalking and a no-contact order violation in Bannock County. In Bingham County, he has entered a written guilty plea for charges of grand theft, malicious injury to property and two counts of burglary.

As part of the plea deal, the Bannock County Prosecutor will dismiss two felony counts of first-degree stalking, one felony for intimidating a witness and four persistent violator enhancements. Misdemeanor charges of second-degree stalking, domestic violence and violating a no-contact order will also be dismissed.

The Bingham County Prosecutor's Office has dismissed three felony counts of grand theft and felonies for burglary, commercial burglary and injury to a jail. A misdemeanor for operating a vehicle without the owner's permission has also been dismissed as part of the agreement.

Anson has been arrested or cited 15 times over the past two years, primarily for charges involving the same woman. He is accused of stalking the woman, attacking her, and breaking into her home. Most recently, he was arrested after he allegedly stole a vehicle and was involved in a high-speed chase with officers while a baby was in the vehicle. The vehicle belonged to the same woman.

As part of the plea agreement, the Bannock prosecutor has agreed to recommend any prison sentences be served concurrently. The defense is free to argue for a rider. The Bingham prosecutor will recommend a rider.

Anson is scheduled for a change of plea hearing in Bannock before District Judge Rick Carnaroli on Oct. 24 and sentencing in Bingham before District Judge Darren Simpson on Dec. 5. Two additional cases filed in Bannock County were not included as part of the plea deal. Charges in those cases include felonies for injuring a child, intimidating a witness, and a persistent violator enhancement. There are also 11 misdemeanor no-contact order violations included in those charges.

BOISE COUNTY

Killer of Horseshoe Bend fifth-grader gets life in prison without parole

ISPFS performed latents, blood alcohol, toxicology, firearms, and biology testing in this case.

Micah Pecyna, 11, died in 2020 after a stranger followed his family back from a gas station and fired 47 rounds into their home.

Author: Katie Terhune

Published: 7:01 PM MDT March 18, 2022

Updated: 7:33 PM MDT March 18, 2022

[Killer of Horseshoe Bend fifth-grader gets life in prison without parole | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)

HORSESHOE BEND, Idaho — The stranger was armed with an AK-47, a handgun, and what he believed were divine instructions from God himself when he knocked on the door of the Horseshoe Bend mobile home where 11-year-old Micah Pecyna lived with his family on March 15, 2020.

The man, 46-year-old Benjamin Poirier, had spotted the family at a nearby gas station and followed them home. When the door opened, Poirier first asked for help - then delivered an unsettling message. "It's the end of the world," he said.



Benjamin Poirier
Ada County Jail

With the door to the home slammed shut again, Jolie French Pecyna dialed 911, telling a dispatcher the man was holding a rifle and told them that "he knew who they were." "I have a child here," she told the dispatcher. "He's still knocking. We're in a trailer, there is nowhere to hide." The knocking on the door stopped. "Please hurry," Pecyna says on the 911 recording. Then the only sounds on the line were the gunshots and the screaming.

Prosecutors say Poirier shot 40 rounds from the AK-47 into the trailer as he walked around it outside, then fired seven more shots from a handgun into the home. Micah, hiding inside with his mother and stepfather, was struck five times, Prosecutor Aaron Strong said. Bullets hit the fifth-grader in the ankle, calf, thigh, groin, and head, killing him.

"That's what Jolie has to go through the rest of her life," Strong said. "That's her last memory of her son." Poirier was sentenced to life in prison without parole Friday afternoon, months after pleading guilty to Micah's murder in exchange for prosecutors taking the death penalty off the table.

Poirier's lawyers say he was in the grip of a psychotic break when the shooting happened and had been hearing voices and interpreting sounds and music on the radio as commands. In court, Poirier told the judge he believed he had accidentally breathed in noxious chemicals that rendered him "temporarily insane," adding that he was horrified and filled with remorse at the knowledge that he had killed a little boy.

"I was hearing things, I was seeing things, I believed I was being told to do things by God," he said. "To me at the time, it seemed like I was supposed to be doing just that, that I was on a mission."

The violence sent shockwaves through Horseshoe Bend, where Micah often played with other children in the neighborhood.

BONNER COUNTY

Benzo found guilty of first-degree murder

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

By Annisa Keith
Staff Writer | May 28, 2022 1:00 AM

[Benzo found guilty of first-degree murder | Bonner County Daily Bee](#)

SANDPOINT — A jury found an Oldtown man guilty Friday of first-degree murder in the 2021 shooting death of Don Bush.

The jury deliberated for approximately nine-and-a-half hours before finding Eric Loren Benzo, 46, guilty in the Oct. 12, 2021, shooting of Bush. The verdict follows a five-day trial in First District Court. Benzo is being held without bond while awaiting sentencing on Aug. 2.

Sheriff's deputies were called to the Oldtown residence at 6:37 a.m. on Oct. 12 after at least one gunshot was reported to law enforcement. Upon deputies' arrival, Donald Bush was found suffering from gunshot wounds. Life-saving efforts were attempted but Bush succumbed to his injuries at the scene, according to court documents.

A witness, Rebecca Ahlers, positively identified Eric Loren Benzo, 46, as the shooter. According to a press release from the Bonner County Sheriff's Office, Ahlers was romantically involved with Benzo before becoming involved with Bush. The relationship between Ahlers and Benzo had ended years before the shooting, and her involvement with Bush was a recent development, beginning in 2021, officials said in court documents.



Bonner County Sheriff's
Office

In evidentiary text messages found on Ahlers' phone, Benzo implied that he was willing to harm Bush in the days leading up to the shooting. "If our boy gets in my face, even slightly, I'll [expletive] shoot him in the face." Benzo texted Ahlers five days before the shooting. Ahlers described her relationship with Benzo as a "best-friends-worst-enemy" type situation. Benzo drove to Ahlers' home in Oldtown in the early hours of Oct. 12, according to court documents. Both Ahlers and Bush exited the residence upon hearing Benzo outside. According to Ahlers' interview with Bonner County Sheriff's Office Detective Phillip Stella, Bush said something to the effect of "let's settle this like men" to Benzo. Stella testified that Benzo then allegedly pulled a firearm on Bush and chased him around a truck in front of the residence before shooting him at least two times at point blank range. Bush was unarmed, but a set of brass knuckles was found close to his right hand by deputies.

Benzo left the scene shortly after the shooting. Only a single spent projectile was found, according to court documents. Benzo was arrested on Oct. 14 by Washington authorities and was originally held on a \$1,000,000 bond in the Spokane County Jail before being extradited to Bonner County days later. He was detained in Washington state on a different felony arrest warrant issued in November 2020. The warrant comes from another Bonner County case that is still pending.

On Nov. 9, 2020, Bonner County Sheriff's deputies located a blue Suburban belonging to Benzo at the Mobil gas station in Oldtown. According to court documents filed by sheriff's deputies, an alert on the vehicle was broadcast earlier that day.

Deputies identified Benzo as the driver and got his permission to search the vehicle. Deputies discovered 51.2 grams of methamphetamine, \$12,476 in cash, a Kimber 45 caliber handgun, a pellet pistol, multiple cellphones, two digital scales, and paraphernalia items.

He was charged with trafficking methamphetamine, possession of a firearm as a convicted felon, and persistent violation in this case. Proceedings have been delayed awaiting the outcome on the murder charge. The two cases make up the entirety of Benzo's felony charges in the state of Idaho. It is unclear as of Friday if the two will be proceeding together to sentencing. Benzo will face a minimum sentence of 10 years for first-degree murder, but could be sentenced up to life in prison on top of a \$50,000 fine. The charges in the November 2020 case could see a maximum penalty of life in prison on top of a cumulative \$30,000 fine.

Local man sentenced for accessory to murder

ISPFS performed field services, firearms, latent print, biology screening, and DNA analysis in this case

By Annisa Keith
Staff Writer | May 18, 2022 1:00 AM

[Local man sentenced for accessory to murder | Bonner County Daily Bee](#)

SANDPOINT — A Bonner County man was sentenced to six months in jail for his role in the November 2020 murder of Brandon Hurst.

Scott Thomas Kachel, 63, accepted a plea deal with the state on March 8, pleading guilty to a charge of being an accessory to murder. At Tuesday's sentencing, the state recommended the court place Kachel on supervised probation with an underlying one- to five-year sentence. Kachel's private defense asked the court to follow the state's recommendation, stating that Kachel is not a threat to society and that he erred in his choices in company. The charge against Kachel stems from the November 2020 death of Brandon Hurst. Two others have already been sentenced in connection to the murder, Cantrip Gatens and Neal Mouser. According to a probable cause affidavit, an individual who witnessed the murder but is not being charged in connection with it, watched Kachel wrap Hurst's body in a camouflage tarp, place him in a utility sled fixed to an ATV, and drive out of sight.



Kachel

Hurst's body was found a mile-and-a-half away from Kachel's property near Upper Pack River Road by a man and his 11-year-old son while they were out on a run.

According to an interview with sheriff's deputies, an individual told investigators that Mouser hid in the tree line and emerged when Hurst arrived at the location, Hurst was shot by Mouser while he was sitting in the vehicle.

The individual had reason to believe Hurst was still alive when he and Gatens left the scene. Later that same day, the individual led Kachel to where Hurst's body was located on Caribou Creek Road.

In a statement at Tuesday's sentencing, Kachel said that he was uncertain if Hurst was alive or not when he arrived at the scene. He said he was fearful about reporting the murder because he believed he would be charged with murder. In that same statement, Kachel said he believed at the time that the individual who led him to the scene would shoot him, too, influencing Kachel's choice to hide Hurst's body.

First District Judge Barbara Buchanan referred to the murder and concealing of Hurst's body as "horrifying," and asked the state, the defense, and Kachel to explain why she not impose harsher punishment. Buchanan referred to Kachel specifically while handing down the sentence.

"Brandon Hurst obviously had a terrible drug problem. Miss Gatens obviously had a terrible drug problem," Buchanan said. "But you had several weeks where you did nothing; where you didn't report the body or take any steps [in reporting the murder]."

"That's right, I didn't call the authorities," Kachel said at sentencing. "I didn't have a phone then. And when I was up in the woods, I was afraid that he would come up and shoot me. And I was afraid that if I went to the authorities with the body that they would charge me with murder. I didn't do the right thing, and I know that. I put the body over the edge [of the road] in the sled. And I waited hours afterwards because I was afraid that [redacted] would be down there and probably shoot me. For me to know that he murdered somebody, I just thought he would kill me, too, that night."

Mouser, and not the individual Kachel is referring to, was sentenced on Jan. 21 for a count of second-degree murder. Mouser was originally charged with first-degree murder, but convicted of second-degree murder later on in court proceedings.

Buchanan cited that the suffering experienced by Hurst's family would play a role in her judgment. Instead of sentencing Kachel to state prison, she handed down a sentence of six months in Bonner County Jail, with an underlying one- to five-year sentence. Kachel will be placed on two years of supervised probation after serving jail time. He was given 21 days credit for time served, and will be made to pay a total of \$645.50 in fines, fees, and court costs.

"I was afraid that I would be charged with murder if I told [law enforcement or Hurst's family] what I had done. And I know that's not right, but that's how I felt. And as time went on, I really felt his family should know. There's no way that he deserved to die. All I can say is, I tried to help him when I could. But, I was no help to him that night, and I'm still not that helpful."

Kachel was taken into custody immediately after sentencing. This is his sixth criminal case in Idaho according to the state's online court database.

Oldtown man arrested on drug charges

ISPFS performed controlled substances analysis in this case

By Daniel Radford

Staff Writer | Sep 30, 2022 1:00 AM

[Oldtown man arrested on drug charges | Bonner County Daily Bee](#)

OLDTOWN — An Oldtown man has been arrested on a variety of drug charges after hundreds of pills, multiple drugs, and drug paraphernalia were found by Bonner County deputies Wednesday. Because the investigation is ongoing, sheriff's office officials said they are not releasing any additional information at this time.



Lara
Bonner County
Sheriff's Office

Erik D. Lara, 34, was arrested on charges of possession of fentanyl with intent to deliver, possession of methamphetamine, marijuana, & drug paraphernalia. In a press release posted to the Bonner County Sheriff's Office Facebook page, officials said they found 300 fake pills of Oxycodone, 30 pills of prepackaged fentanyl, marijuana, possibly meth, and "assorted drug paraphernalia." The fentanyl pills alone are estimated to have a street value worth about \$3,000.

Deputies arrested Lara at his residence and detectives obtained a search warrant for the premises. Lara was held without bail before he appeared in court for an initial appearance Thursday afternoon. His preliminary hearing will be Oct. 12.

Fentanyl overdose is the leading cause of death for Americans under 50, beating out heart disease, cancer, and all other accidents, Bonner County Sheriff Daryl Wheeler said in the online press release.

"Practically all the pills seized by law enforcement are fake, and 40% contain a potentially lethal amount of fentanyl," Wheeler said.

Fentanyl is involved in more American youth drug deaths than heroin, meth, cocaine, benzos and Rx drugs combined, Wheeler said. Since fentanyl is cheap, potent, and profitable dealers often use it to make fake pills and the drug can even be found in "party drugs" like cocaine and MDMA, he added. Illegally made fentanyl is the primary driver of the recent increase in all U.S. overdose deaths and fentanyl-involved deaths are fastest growing among 14-23 year olds, the press release stated.

"Our deputies and detectives will continue to put pressure on drug traffickers in Bonner County in an effort to keep our communities, our visitors, and our kids safe," Wheeler said.

Lara is currently charged with both felony and misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance, felony delivery of a controlled substance, and misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia and could face tens of thousands of dollars in fines and life in prison if convicted.

Warrants led to arrests, discovery of drugs

ISPFS performed controlled substances analysis in this case.

By Caroline Lobsinger

Staff Writer | Oct 1, 2022 1:00 AM

[Warrants led to arrests, discovery of drugs | Bonner County Daily Bee](#)

SANDPOINT — Two people were arrested and an unspecified amount of various drugs and drug paraphernalia were seized after a series of search warrants were executed in the city this week.

The searches are a reminder that fentanyl is present in the community and region, Sandpoint Police Chief Corey Coon said.

"I strongly encourage our community members to do a quick google search and educate themselves and their family members," he said. "Fentanyl in two forms has been recovered in Sandpoint this week – 'Blues' and 'Skittles.' Both commonly have the letter 'M' embossed on one side and the number 30 on the other."

The search warrants on the homes of suspected drug dealers began Monday, Sept. 26, when Sandpoint Police assisted a Drug Enforcement Agency task force with a search warrant in south Sandpoint, City Administrator Jennifer Stapleton said.

The search led to the discovery of an undisclosed amount of colored fentanyl pills — commonly known as "skittles" — and other drug related paraphernalia. Stapleton said the warrant is related to an earlier investigation that intercepted a large delivery of fentanyl to the residence. The second warrant was served Wednesday at a room at the America's Best Value Inn, 807 N. Fifth Ave., Sandpoint. The search, which led to the arrest of two people, also led to the seizure of unspecified amount of methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl pills.



Straley

Daryl N. David, 25, of Bonners Ferry, and Rachel J. Straley, 36, of Spokane, were arrested on charges of possession of methamphetamine and cited of charges possession of paraphernalia and frequenting. Stapleton said additional charges are possible pending lab results for the heroin and fentanyl.

On Friday, Sandpoint Police served a search warrant for narcotics at a residence located in the 1100 block of Main Street in central Sandpoint. An undisclosed amount of methamphetamine, fentanyl "blues" and drug paraphernalia were seized under this warrant.

Formal charges are pending results from the state crime lab, Stapleton said.

In the past two weeks, police responded to a local juvenile male who had overdosed on what they believe was fentanyl. Following medical treatment, the juvenile recovered. However, Stapleton said a second overdose involving a local 21-year-old male believed to be using fentanyl resulted in his death.

With Halloween just around the corner, Coon said it is a good time to remind the community's youth that they should not take candy or any other food or drink that is not in a sealed wrapper or container.

"Parents should inspect the Halloween goodies before the little kids just dive in and enjoy," Coon said.

"Teenagers should be warned from taking candy that may be passed around by friends or at parties. Rainbow fentanyl can look like sweet tarts, skittles, or bubble gum and just one can be deadly."

BONNEVILLE COUNTY

Idaho Falls man sentenced for the murder of his adoptive father

ISPFS performed latent print and firearms analysis in this case.

Kaitlyn Hart, Eastidahonews.com

Local Posted: Jun 24, 2022, 1:16 PM | Updated: JUN 24, 2022, 1:41 PM

IDAHO FALLS MAN SENTENCED FOR THE MURDER OF HIS ADOPTIVE FATHER - EAST IDAHO NEWS

IDAHO FALLS – A local man who murdered his adoptive father will serve at least 27 years in prison.

Westley Jonathon Hightower, 19, was sentenced Friday to 27 years fixed and 40 years indeterminate, meaning Hightower could potentially serve 67 years behind bars. He will be eligible for parole in 2049.

Hightower was charged with first-degree murder after shooting and killing Larry H. Powell on Sept. 28 inside his home on Ammon Road.

During the sentencing, Powell's daughter, Nicole McDonald, read a victim impact statement and asked Judge Dane Watkins to give Hightower the maximum sentence. "My dad was a good and mild-mannered person," said McDonald. "His last words to me were, 'You've done very well sweetheart. I'm very proud of you and your little family.'" McDonald showed photos of her family, including Powell attending weddings, graduations and spending time with loved ones. Judge Watkins noted the pictures were striking, eliciting emotion throughout the courtroom.

"I was struck by a photograph of two hands with rings holding hands," Watkins said before announcing the sentencing. "Life is not simple. We all in this courtroom know it. But it was cut short. You ended this. Those photographs demonstrated an aging process, accumulating memories and we turned from that to an end. Powell's wife and Hightower's adoptive mother Carol Powell also provided a statement, which was read by a family member after she became too emotional to finish. "Today, I am torn between two facts as a result of my husband's murder," said Powell. "One: one of the murderers, Westley Hightower, is my son whom I love dearly. Two: the two monsters are, Westley and Daniel, who murdered my husband..."

Daniel Wood, an accomplice in the murder, was sentenced in March to serve at least 20 years in prison for playing a part in Powell's murder.

Justin Ferguson, a Bonneville County Jail inmate, testified during the sentencing hearing that he overheard Wood bragging about Powell's murder while both were incarcerated.

"It was like he was trying to get credit for it. He was telling the story as if he was trying to impress people," said Ferguson. "It was like he wanted the recognition for something that he didn't do. He was smiling and thinking that it was humorous."

Hightower provided a statement himself, apologizing to his mother, family and neighbors. "I would like to say I'm sorry to my mom for taking so much love that she built a life with," said Hightower. "I can only imagine the pain and suffering that she is going through, and because of my selfish actions, she did not just lose a husband, she lost a son too."

Watkins responded to Hightower's statement before the official sentencing.

"As you made your statement, you began by speaking directly to your mother. You didn't see her reaction to your words. She held her face in her hands," said Judge Watkins. "I don't know all of those emotions that she might be feeling, all I can say is that it demonstrates complete and utter anguish. And it's because of you."

Local man found guilty of second-degree murder in shooting death of friend

ISPFS performed firearms, biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.

Kaitlyn Hart, Eastidahonews.com

Local Posted: Jun 10, 2022, 9:28 PM / Updated: Jun 10, 2022 PM

LOCAL MAN FOUND GUILTY OF SECOND-DEGREE MURDER IN SHOOTING DEATH OF FRIEND - EAST IDAHO NEWS

IDAHO FALLS — Marshal Dee Hendricks, 31, was convicted of second-degree murder Friday for the 2019 shooting death of his friend, Rory Neddo.

The jury deliberated for roughly three and a half hours before delivering their verdict. They found that Hendricks, who was on trial for first-degree murder and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, was not guilty of either. Instead, he was convicted of second-degree murder. "I feel like this isn't really our victory, it's the jury's victory," prosecuting attorney Russell Spencer said. "I'm glad there's been justice for the family."

The defense rested their case Friday after calling Hendricks to the stand. He testified that he believed Neddo had a gun during the altercation over an alleged affair between Hendricks and Neddo's ex-girlfriend. He claimed the shooting was in self-defense.

"I'm disappointed, but I respect the jury, you know, they do what they can. I never criticize jurors," said defense attorney Allen Browning. "But I disagree, I disagree with their outcome."

Hendricks, who has been facing these charges for almost three years, is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 19 at 11:30 a.m., although the date may be moved up, according to District Judge Dane Watkins.

"The state is always appreciative of people who are willing to give their time for this kind of service," Bonneville County Prosecutor Alayne Bean said. "This has been a long trial, and no matter the outcome, there's always people who will suffer, and people who will be glad, and our hearts go to those who are on both sides of the aisle." Second-degree murder is punishable by at least 10 years in prison and may extend to life in prison.

Man facing drug trafficking charges in Bonneville County

ISPFS performed controlled substance testing in this case for both incident dates mentioned in the article.

Rett Nelson, Eastidahonews.com

Posted: Mar 22, 2022, 11:43 am | Updated: Mar 22, 2022, 11:45 am

Man facing drug trafficking charges in Bonneville County - East Idaho News

IDAHO FALLS — A 52-year-old man is facing two felony counts of drug trafficking in heroin.

Ricky Benjamin made his initial court appearance on Feb. 14. He pleaded not guilty to both charges during his arraignment in district court last week.

Police reports show Benjamin offered to sell a detective working undercover with the Bonneville County Special Investigations Unit half an ounce of heroin for \$750 on May 18, 2020. They arranged to meet in the parking lot of Walmart at 1201 South 25th East in Ammon.

“Surveillance units observed a gray Toyota Tundra pickup ... park next to the (detective’s) vehicle,” according to an affidavit of probable cause.

The detective got into the back passenger side door of the Toyota before getting out and rummaging around in his own vehicle and getting back into the passenger door of Benjamin’s vehicle. Benjamin allegedly drove away a short time later when the detective got out.

The detective met with other members of the investigations unit later at an undisclosed location and handed over what officers describe as a “small bag containing a black tar substance.” Benjamin, who was seated in the front passenger seat, was allegedly one of three people in the vehicle.

The bag was later tested and weighed. The field test didn’t immediately recognize it as a drug, but it came back with a weight of 12.3 grams. Detectives submitted it to a state lab for further testing.

A similar incident is reported to have occurred on June 17, 2020. Another undercover detective was allegedly contacted by Benjamin and offered half an ounce of heroin for \$850. They met in the Albertson’s parking lot at 590 East 17th Street in Idaho Falls in a black Honda Civic. The detective walked away with a bag containing a black hard substance. It had a packaged weight of 10.7 grams, but also didn’t immediately test as a drug.

The substances obtained in both instances were later confirmed to be heroin by the state lab.

Benjamin was arrested and taken into custody on Feb. 11. District Judge Dane Watkins set his bond at \$50,000. An order for work detail was filed on March 16. A status conference is set for April 5. If convicted, Benjamin could get 10 years to life in prison and a \$15,000 to \$100,000 fine.

Although Benjamin is accused of these crimes, it does not necessarily mean he committed them. Everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty.



Ricky Benjamin
Bonneville County Jail

Man hospitalized in house fire 2 years ago now charged with starting it

ISPFS performed fire debris analysis in this case.

Rett Nelson, Eastidahonews.com

Posted: Mar 8, 2022, 5:10 pm

Man hospitalized in house fire 2 years ago now charged with starting it - East Idaho News

IDAHO FALLS — An Idaho Falls man injured in a house fire two years ago has been charged with third-degree arson for allegedly starting that fire.

Talissa Larsen and Wayne Neslen were in the basement of a home on the 700 block of Terrance Drive when it caught fire on July 6, 2020. They were taken by ambulance to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center with severe burns. Later that day, Larsen told hospital staff Neslen “had poured gas on me,” according to an affidavit of probable cause.



Wayne Neslen
Bonneville County Jail

Investigators spoke with Larsen the next day and she explained that she and Neslen had gotten into a fight and as she was throwing her dirty clothes into a basket, she said he poured gas on her. "Talissa told me that she does not remember how she got lit," the officer who filed the report wrote. An investigator for Farm Bureau Insurance told police he determined the fire had started in a basement bedroom and that all the samples collected "were positive for the presence of gasoline." He also said a butane lighter found in the corner of the room was used to start the fire. Officers caught up with Neslen several months later because he was out of town. He told them he had been working on the air conditioner in the basement early the morning of the fire and there was a gas can down there. He said Larsen was not home at the time, but they watched TV together later and "got into it." Neslen told the officer he didn't remember what the argument was about. The clothes then ignited, Neslen says in the police report, and he ran upstairs to get a hose. He went back down to get Larsen before getting out of the house. "I asked Wayne where the gas can was and he had said that it was by the walkway but it could've been by the TV. I asked him if it was possible that he had the gas can in his hand, and he didn't think so," the officer wrote. It's unclear why charges were not filed until Feb. 4 of this year. Neslen was booked into the Bonneville County Jail and posted \$25,000 bond on March 3. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on March 16.

Man sentenced for lewd conduct with a child

ISPFS performed biology screening and DNA analysis in this case

Kaitlyn Hart, Eastidahonews.com

Posted: Jul 1, 2022, 1:21 pm

[Man sentenced for lewd conduct with a child - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS – A local man was sentenced this week for a felony charge of lewd conduct with a child under 16.

Bill Ernest Davenport, 30, was sentenced to serve 4 years fixed time in prison with 17 years indeterminate, meaning he could potentially spend 21 years behind bars. He will be eligible for parole in 2026. Idaho Falls Police detectives learned about the alleged abuse in November 2020 from Child Protective Services. When interviewed by police, the victim and Davenport both denied any sexual abuse occurred but he later admitted they were "boyfriend" and "girlfriend," according to court documents.

A search of Davenport's phone allegedly showed evidence of an illicit relationship, according to police, including a video on Davenport's phone of him molesting the 13-year-old victim. During the investigation, police spoke with the victim's mother, who denied any knowledge of the relationship. However, others told investigators the mother actively encouraged the relationship between Davenport and the victim. Investigators asked the mother to be charged with injury to a child, but it is unclear whether or not she ever was.



Man sentenced for possession of meth and fentanyl

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Kaitlyn Hart, Eastidahonews.com

Posted: Sep 30, 2022, 5:16 pm

[Man sentenced for possession of meth and fentanyl - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS — A local man has been sentenced after he was caught in a parking lot with drugs and the woman he was with turned him in. Dustin James McGinnis, 32, was sentenced to 2 to 4 years in prison.

McGinnis was originally charged with two counts of felony possession of a controlled substance, one count of felony grand theft by acquiring lost property, one count of misdemeanor use or possession of drug paraphernalia and one count of misdemeanor providing false information to an officer.

As part of a plea agreement, the prosecution agreed to drop the last three charges and McGinnis pleaded guilty to two counts of felony possession of a controlled substance.

Probable cause documents say that in March, a Bonneville County Sheriff's deputy noticed a Chevy truck with no plates in the parking lot of an Idaho Falls hotel. When he approached the truck, he saw a man and a woman inside. The deputy states in court documents that he recognized the woman from "multiple narcotic and theft-related encounters." When he asked for the man's name, he said it was "Joshua Bonson."

The officer says in the police report that based on his training and "the behavior and answer to basic questions," he believed that the man was giving him a fake name. It was then that the woman spoke up and told the deputy, "He is lying and he has drugs on him." The woman told the deputy that the man's name was Dustin McGinnis, he had a warrant out for his arrest, and that he had been trying to get her to "smoke a 'dirty thirty' with him."

McGinnis told the deputy that he lied about his name because "he has a warrant." The deputy was able to confirm that McGinnis has a no-bond Idaho Department of Correction warrant out for his arrest.

When searching McGinnis, the deputy found "a pen that was hollowed out that contained approximately .88 grams of methamphetamine."

During the search of the truck, the deputy found "one partial and one whole 'dirty thirty' blue circular pill" and "multiple 'tooters' used for inhaling narcotics." Also found was a used syringe.

Inside of McGinnis' wallet was a credit card that belonged to a woman that McGinnis said he did not know. McGinnis told the deputy that he had "just picked it up off the ground."

Man sentenced for selling fentanyl pills

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Andrea Olson, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Aug 25, 2022, 7:40 pm | Updated: Aug 26, 2022, 11:59 am

[Man sentenced for selling fentanyl pills - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS — A 28-year-old man was sentenced to prison Wednesday after selling fentanyl pills.

Nickolas Rasmussen was sentenced in the Bonneville County Courthouse in front of District Judge Bruce Pickett and given a one-year determinate prison term with nine years indeterminate. "I find that you are not a good candidate for probation. I can't justify putting you on probation with the history of selling substances," Pickett said in court. Rasmussen was dressed in a black shirt and had come on his own since he posted bail in April.

He was originally charged with felony delivery of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a school back in December. As part of a plea agreement, he agreed to plead guilty to felony delivery of a controlled substance. The delivery of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a school enhancement was dismissed.

"He is about 10 to 11 houses down from Hawthorne Elementary and people in Idaho Falls don't like the idea of selling dope while their kids are walking home from school," said Sean Johnson, an attorney with the state of Idaho.

Charging documents show on Nov. 23, Rasmussen allegedly sold four "dirty thirty" fentanyl pills to an undercover police detective for \$100. Idaho Falls Police, Bonneville County Sheriff's Office and Idaho State Police continued to set up undercover operations to purchase the drugs.

"He has had a severe, serious substance abuse addiction since he was about 14 or 15," said Kelly Mallard, Rasmussen's lawyer. Mallard explained that Rasmussen turned his life around at one point. He gained employment, got married, bought a house and was doing very well until the house burnt down.

“Nick has a reoccurring back issue. He and his wife were both on pain meds, legally prescribed. Their pain meds were in some of the damage that went up in the fire. The doctors who prescribed the pain meds would not give him any more,” Mallard said in court. “Foolishly, they sought pain medication on the street. He bought what he thought was simple oxycodone, turned out it had fentanyl, and after buying that a few times, he himself was addicted...”

Mallard explained Rasmussen then started selling to support his own habit and that’s when law enforcement found out. “He’s an addict who needs help,” Mallard said. However, he believes that Rasmussen can be successful.

Lance Turman owns a concrete business and employed Rasmussen. Turman was called to the stand. “He has been great (as an employee),” Turman said. Turman was asked if he knew prior to hiring Rasmussen about his pending charges. “Yes...I don’t have a problem hiring people if I think they are sorry,” Turman said. Later, Rasmussen addressed the court and the judge with tears in his eyes and said he was sorry. “I’d like to apologize for the actions that I have done. I just wish to see my daughter grow old. I’m just sorry,” he said. After Rasmussen was sentenced, he was put in handcuffs and taken away.

“The court is going to recommend that you be placed in either their treatment program or a similar program to the rider however it’s in the prison system... or the work facility in St. Anthony. Hopefully, you will take advantage of the training and treatment in the prison system,” said Pickett.

Rasmussen’s wife J’Lynn Rasmussen has a case filed against her for being involved similarly after drug deals with undercover cops. She is scheduled for sentencing on Sept. 21 at the Bonneville County Courthouse.

Man sentenced to prison for trafficking meth in sriracha sauce

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Kaitlyn Hart, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Oct 16, 2022, 8:15 am

[Man sentenced to prison for trafficking meth in sriracha sauce - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS – A local man who hid drugs in sauce was sentenced on meth trafficking charges Wednesday. District Judge Bruce Pickett sentenced Derek Bryan Lee Gandall to 5 to 10 years in prison for felony drug trafficking of methamphetamine. Gandall was ordered to pay \$15,785 in legal fees as well.

Other charges were dropped during a plea agreement.

In November 2021, Idaho Falls Police learned of a potentially stolen rental car. The rental company told officers that a 2020 white Jeep Grand Cherokee had been rented by Gandall and he had failed to return it. Four days later, officers spotted a “stolen white Jeep” in Idaho Falls, according to a department news release. An officer working under cover used a fake Facebook account to set up a time and place to buy drugs. When officers arrived, Gandall was in a black Chevrolet Silverado. He “exited the vehicle and began to run around the north side of the motel,” according to court documents.

Officers caught him and found a white powdery substance on him. They also found a gun in his truck, and confirmed that Gandall was previously a convicted felon. Additional items were found, including 250 9mm rounds, handgun magazines, a box of glass meth pipes, empty baggies, a scale and several hundred “dirty thirty” fentanyl pills. Inside a black backpack were two large bundles of sriracha sauce and mustard wrapped in cellophane. It was later determined to be meth. Gandall told the officers he “got the product that way and it was used to try and mask the smell from drug dogs.”



Derek Bryan Lee Gandall
Bonneville County Jail

Man will spend at least 20 years in prison for second-degree murder

ISPFS performed fingerprint and firearm analysis in this case.

Rhett Nelson, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Mar 3, 2022, 5:28 pm | Updated: Mar 3, 2022, 8:27 pm

[Man will spend at least 20 years in prison for second-degree murder - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS – Daniel Wood appeared stoic as he offered an apology in court to family members for his involvement in the murder of an Ammon man 18 months ago.

During a hearing Thursday afternoon, District Judge Dane Watkins ordered 19-year-old Wood to serve a 20-year fixed sentence with 40-years indeterminate for playing a part in the murder of Larry H. Powell in September 2020. A \$5,000 compensatory fine was also imposed.

Wood pleaded guilty to felony second-degree murder charges in December. Deputies found Powell's body inside his Ammon home after someone called 911 saying a man wearing a tan hoodie with dark hair had shot Powell and run away from the house. Bonneville County Sheriff's deputies found Wood, who said he was only a witness to the shooting and that his friend, Westley Hightower, pulled the trigger.

"I coerced and assisted Hightower," Wood said at his change-of-plea hearing. "I distracted the guy while Hightower shot him."

Wood, who is homeless, told detectives he met Hightower just days before the shooting, and they had conversations about killing Powell, according to detectives.

"Wood disclosed that Hightower offered him 'some money' and to live at Powell's residence if he helped Hightower murder Powell and his wife," according to court documents.

About two days before the shooting, both Hightower and Wood admitted to previously trying to poison Powell in their attempts to kill him, documents say.

A member of the Powell family read from a victim impact statement during Thursday's proceedings and mentioned that during a previous hearing, Wood did not mention Powell's name.

"He couldn't even bother to say his name. Does he even know it?" the family member said. "The most disturbing thing to me about Wood's role in this crime is that he didn't even know (the victim) and had nothing to gain from his death, yet decided to participate in killing him anyway."

Bonneville County Prosecutor Alayne Bean reiterated the words of the family member, noting, "Westley was not emboldened to take those steps until he met Daniel. Daniel does not understand his pivotal role in this. But for these two meeting together, Larry Powell may still be alive today."

Defense attorney Neal Randall highlighted Wood's past, citing a lack of a good parental role model in his life and an extensive record with the Juvenile Department of Corrections. He said Wood got a score of 70 on an IQ test, which makes his cognitive abilities lower than normal.

"I don't present that to excuse Daniel's actions," he said. "The defense only offers this as a window for the family, who is rightfully grieving and will forever grieve this crime. I implore the court to understand that we're not dealing with a person who has a normal thought process."

Randall also addressed Wood's attitude during the litigation process, which some have regarded as flippant. The attorney said Wood's behavior is a result of his cognitive impairments and that there was no "malintent" behind it.

Randall pointed out it's not likely that Wood will ever be in a position to pay that fine. Bean argued it's a "burden" that should remain in place regardless of Wood's cognitive or financial ability, which Watkins upheld. Watkins gave Wood a chance to make a statement prior to sentencing. His demeanor was neutral as he offered an apology to Powell's family.



Daniel Wood &
Neal Randall

“I have issues sleeping at night due to the scenery that I seen. I’m just terribly sorry that I had to put them through something like this. I’ll never know what it’s like to go through something like this because I feel responsible for taking someone’s life,” Wood said.

Hightower pleaded guilty in July to felony first-degree murder for his role in Powell’s killing. He’s scheduled to be sentenced on March 7.

Mayor apologizes as Chris Tapp, city of Idaho Falls settle lawsuit for \$11.7 million

ISPFS performed DNA analysis in the original case in 1997.

Nate Easton, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Jun 9, 2022, 9:43 pm | Updated: Jun 9, 2022, 9:52 pm

[Mayor apologizes as Chris Tapp, city of Idaho Falls settle lawsuit for \\$11.7 million - East Idaho News](#)

IDAHO FALLS — Christopher Tapp and the city of Idaho Falls agreed to settle a lawsuit Thursday for \$11.7 million.

Tapp was wrongfully convicted in 1997 for the rape and murder of 18-year-old Angie Dodge. He tried multiple times to appeal the conviction and his DNA did not match DNA at the crime scene.

Tapp was ultimately released from prison in 2017 and exonerated in 2019 when investigators arrested 54-year-old Brian Dripps. Dripps ultimately pleaded guilty and was sentenced 20 years to life in prison in 2021.

“No dollar amount could ever make up for the over 20 years of my life I spent in prison for crimes I did not commit. However, the settlement will help me move forward with my life,” Tapp said in a statement Thursday night.

The settlement provides that the city of Idaho Falls discuss possible reforms to its interrogation techniques with leading experts on the subject, according to a news release from Neufeld Scheck & Brustin, Tapp’s attorneys. Tapp sued the city of Idaho Falls and the Idaho Falls Police Department in federal court in October 2020. The city asked a judge to dismiss the lawsuit but ultimately the Idaho Falls City Council approved the settlement Thursday.

“Chris Tapp’s wrongful conviction never should have happened; DNA cleared him over 20 years ago,” said Anna Benvenuti Hoffmann of Neufeld Scheck & Brustin. “We hope this settlement is a wake-up call to the many police departments still using the same practices of lying, deception, and coercion as Idaho Falls did — and that it still needs to reform — so that other innocents don’t suffer like Chris Tapp has.”

Mayor Rebecca Casper apologized to Tapp and his mother in a letter and promised the city will do better moving forward.

“Please accept this sincere apology to you and to your mother, Mrs. Tapp, for the city’s role in your wrongful conviction and subsequent incarceration, as well the harm and damages that you and your family have endured over these many years,” Casper wrote. “We at the city of Idaho Falls hope that the resolution of your civil case and this sincere expression of an apology help bring healing and closure to both Mrs. Tapp and to you. In addition to the settlement, the city pledges to review its policies, procedures, and training (especially related to custodial interrogations) and to revise them, as needed, to prevent any recurrence of what happened in your case.”



Christopher Tapp

Sentencing hearing scheduled for suspect who pleaded guilty to killing Ammon man

ISPFS performed latent print and firearms analysis in this case.

Rhett Nelson, EastIdahoNews.com

Posted: Apr 30, 2022, 1:30 pm | Updated: May 1, 2022, 4:22 pm

Sentencing hearing scheduled for suspect who pleaded guilty to killing Ammon man - East Idaho News

Westley Hightower
Bonneville County Jail

IDAHO FALLS – A man who pleaded guilty to murdering an Ammon resident 18 months ago will be sentenced in June.

Westley Jonathon Hightower, 19, pleaded guilty to felony first-degree murder last July for his role in killing 68-year-old Larry Powell in September 2020.

The guilty plea was part of a plea agreement made with Bonneville County prosecutors that stipulates they will recommend no more than 27-years to life in prison. Defense Attorney Rocky Wixom will also recommend Hightower spend no less than 20-years in prison. The plea agreement is non-binding, meaning District Judge Dane H. Watkins Jr.

does not have to follow the recommendations and could sentence Hightower to more or less time in prison. Hightower, who is the adopted son of Powell's wife, is one of two teens who was arrested after deputies found Powell's body at his home on Ammon Road. Daniel Wood was the other person involved. Judge Watkins sentenced Wood to a 20-year fixed prison sentence with 40-years indeterminate in March. Following the shooting, someone called 911 saying a man wearing a tan hoodie with dark hair had shot Powell and run away from the house.

Bonneville County Sheriff's deputies found Wood, who said he was only a witness to the shooting and that his friend, Westley Hightower, pulled the trigger. "I coerced and assisted Hightower," Wood said at his change-of-plea hearing. "I distracted the guy while Hightower shot him." Wood told detectives he met Hightower just days before the shooting, and they had conversations about killing Powell, according to detectives.

"Wood disclosed that Hightower offered him 'some money' and to live at Powell's residence if he helped Hightower murder Powell and his wife," according to court documents.

About two days before the shooting, both Hightower and Wood admitted to previously trying to poison Powell in their attempts to kill him, documents say. Hightower's sentencing hearing will take place on June 24. It was originally scheduled for March 7. His charge carries a maximum penalty of death or life imprisonment with a 10-year minimum. It also carries with it a \$5,000 compensatory fine and an additional \$50,000 fine.

CANYON COUNTY

Caldwell man found guilty of first-degree murder for 2021 shooting

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

A jury found Ethan Almaraz guilty of first-degree murder with a gang enhancement, aggravated battery by use of a deadly weapon, and two counts of aggravated assault.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 9:05 PM MDT October 31, 2022

Updated: 9:25 PM MDT October 31, 2022

[Caldwell man found guilty in 2021 shooting | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)

BOISE, Idaho — A Caldwell man has been found guilty of multiple charges including first-degree murder from a shooting that left one man dead and another injured in September 2021.

Ethan S. Almaraz was involved in a gang homicide that occurred on Sept. 17, 2021. After a seven-day trial that ended on Oct. 25, a Canyon County jury found Almaraz guilty of first-degree murder with a gang enhancement, aggravated battery by use of a deadly weapon, and two counts of aggravated assault by use of a deadly weapon.

Although Almaraz was 17 when he was charged, he was tried as an adult. Three other teens were also charged in connection to the shooting but have not yet gone to trial. Almaraz's sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 11, 2023,

at the Canyon County Courthouse. Almaraz, along with three other teens, got into a fight with another group near the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Hillcrest Street in Caldwell, according to the Caldwell Police Department (CPD). During the fight, one of the people pulled out a handgun and fired several times, hitting Jose Hernandez and another 19-year-old man. Both men were hospitalized, but Hernandez later died from his injuries.

Man who killed Nampa roommate sentenced to 48 years in prison

ISPFS performed firearms, biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.

Christopher J. Williams shot 22-year-old James Chantz in September 2021 at a Nampa apartment complex.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 2:58 PM MDT July 7, 2022

Updated: 3:01 PM MDT July 7, 2022

[Pennsylvania man sentenced for killing roommate in Nampa | ktvb.com](https://www.ktvb.com/news/pennsylvania-man-sentenced-for-killing-roommate-in-nampa)



Canyon County Jail

CALDWELL, Idaho — A Pennsylvania man who was living in Nampa when he shot and killed his roommate in September 2021 has been sentenced for voluntary manslaughter, grand theft and destruction of evidence.

District Judge Gene A. Petty on Wednesday sentenced Christopher J. Williams, 21, to 15 years fixed for voluntary manslaughter for the death of 22-year-old James Chantz; also, 3 years fixed plus 25 years indeterminate for two counts of grand theft; and 5 years indeterminate for destruction of evidence.

The total unified sentence is 48 years in prison, which includes 18 years before Williams becomes eligible for possible parole. Williams is also ordered to pay a \$5,000 civil penalty to Chantz's family, plus court costs and to reimburse his public defender.

Police reports state Williams and Chantz, who were living together at the time of Chantz's death, got into a fight on Sept. 16, 2021, after Chantz told Williams he needed to pack up his stuff and leave the apartment. Williams told police the two got into a struggle after Chantz pulled a gun on him. Williams wrestled the gun away from Chantz and fired three times. One of the shots hit Chantz in the head. According to police, Williams stole Chantz's truck and used his debit cards multiple times in Nampa and Bliss. Williams was arrested later that night in Utah after a police pursuit. Multiple parties had reported him for possible DUI while driving the truck stolen from Chantz.

Williams was originally charged with second-degree murder, but pleaded guilty in May 2022 to voluntary manslaughter, two counts of grand theft and destruction of evidence.

Caldwell man sentenced for shooting at police officers during September 2021 standoff

ISPFS performed firearms, blood alcohol and toxicology testing in this case.

The man had told detectives he did not intend to harm officers. The judge this week told him, "you deserve to be in prison."

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 3:32 PM MDT March 29, 2022

Updated: 9:49 AM MDT March 30, 2022

[Man who shot at Caldwell police in 2021 standoff sentenced | ktvb.com](https://www.ktvb.com/news/caldwell-man-sentenced-for-shooting-at-police-officers-during-september-2021-standoff)



Canyon County Jail

CALDWELL, Idaho — A Caldwell man arrested after standoff with police that lasted several hours in September 2021 is going to prison, a judge ordered this week.

Bradley R. Day, 51, was sentenced Monday for two counts of assault or battery on certain personnel, with an aggravated enhancement on one of the counts. Third District Judge Gene Petty sentenced Day to a fixed prison sentence of 8 years, followed by 22 years indeterminate, for the aggravated assault or battery count; and 4 years fixed, followed by 11 years indeterminate, for the second assault or battery count. He receives credit for 187 days served. Day pleaded guilty to those two counts in January.

During a standoff on September 23, 2021, Day fired multiple shots from a rifle at Caldwell Police officers responding to a 911 call about a man with a gun who was threatening to kill himself at a home on Linden Street.

According to Canyon County Prosecutor Bryan Taylor, Day began shooting at officers from a first-floor window before moving to a second-floor window, where he continued to fire. The gunfire injured one officer in the wrist and caused severe damage to a patrol car. Officers returned fire in Day's direction until he eventually stopped shooting. Day was not injured. Officers arrested him a few hours later inside the home. Day later told detectives that he didn't intend to kill any police officers; he only shot at them because he wanted officers to kill him.

During Monday's sentencing, Judge Petty said, "The person you directed harm to was someone who had not done anything to you... For this evening, for this crime, you deserve to be in prison."

Caldwell police officers cleared in shooting death of 92-year-old man in November

ISPFS performed firearms, blood alcohol and toxicology analyses in this case.

The Critical Incident Task Force recently wrapped up its investigation into the fatal interaction between Caldwell police officers and Kernie Armstrong.

Author: Morgan Romero

Published: 7:19 PM MDT June 23, 2022

Updated: 6:43 PM MDT June 28, 2022

[Caldwell police officers cleared in shooting death of 92-year-old | ktvb.com](https://www.ktvb.com/news/caldwell-police-officers-cleared-in-shooting-death-of-92-year-old-man-in-november)

CALDWELL, Idaho — Two Caldwell Police officers who shot and killed a 92-year-old man after they say he pointed a gun at them in November 2021 were cleared in the shooting, according to investigatory reports. The incident happened on the 19000 block of Allegheny Way in Caldwell before 1 a.m. on Nov. 16, 2021. The Critical Incident Task Force (CITF) - led by Idaho State Police - recently wrapped up its investigation into the interaction between Caldwell police and Kernie Armstrong.

The Twin Falls County Prosecutors Office reviewed the CITF investigation and found no evidence to support a criminal charge against the Caldwell Police officers involved. Police reports obtained by 7Investigates detail a neighbor calling 911 to report a suspicious person driving back and forth down their street. When officers arrived, they went to talk to the person in the driver's seat.

Armstrong was in the driver's seat, parked across the street from where he lived. The two responding officers said Armstrong immediately pointed his revolver at them. They ran back and as Armstrong continued pointing his gun at them, the officers shot him multiple times in the head and chest, killing him.

Other officers who responded after the shooting say they found two guns in Armstrong's car. After the incident, investigatory reports show neighbors told officers they helped take care of 92-year-old Armstrong for the past year because he suffered from dementia and paranoia. Armstrong's son also confirmed what the neighbors said to 7Investigates on Thursday. Police reports note neighbors telling officers that Armstrong always carried guns and had a large firearms collection.

Another Caldwell officer wrote in his report after the incident that he came in contact with Armstrong hours earlier, on Nov. 15, outside a Jacksons in Caldwell. Armstrong expressed fear for his life but the officer didn't think he was a threat to himself or anyone else, according to his report. During the interaction, the officer said Armstrong also told him he was a gun collector.

Armstrong's son Glenn told 7Investigates he didn't know the CITF investigation had wrapped up and that any reports were filed. He feels he's been in the dark since the day his father died. "It's a shock and surprise that the news knows more about Kernie's death than the family does," Glenn said. Glenn said he doesn't know how the situation escalated to such a tragic ending.

Canyon County Prosecuting Attorney Bryan Taylor requested Twin Falls County Prosecuting Attorney Grant Loeb review the CITF investigation into the deadly force incident involving Kernie Armstrong.

According to the CITF letter, Loeb said after reviewing evidence, reading the reports and meeting with Idaho State Police detectives, he found the officers were acting in self-defense and were concerned that Kernie posed a threat to them and others.

"Therefore, when the Caldwell Police Officers shot Armstrong, they were not only lawfully defending themselves and other law enforcement officers, but were acting to protect the general public from imminent danger," Loeb wrote. "Based on the foregoing, I have concluded that Caldwell Police Officers who fired on Kernie Armstrong were justified in using deadly force."

California man sent to prison for kidnapping 11-year-old Idaho girl

ISPFS performed biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.

Brian Sangjoon Lee enticed the 11-year-old online before coming to Idaho.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 3:03 PM MDT May 25, 2022

Updated: 3:23 PM MDT May 25, 2022

[California man sentenced for kidnapping Idaho girl | ktvb.com](https://ktvb.com)

CALDWELL, Idaho — A California man who police say enticed an 11-year-old Nampa girl through an online gaming program is going to prison, but how much time he spends behind bars will depend on whether he completes a treatment program.

Judge Randall Grove on Tuesday sentenced Brian Sangjoon Lee to a total of 10 years in prison -- 2 years fixed and 8 years indeterminate -- but placed him in a one-year retained jurisdiction, or "rider," program. Lee also receives credit for 275 days served in jail. Once Lee completes the rider, the court will determine whether to sentence him to his full term, or place him on probation.

Lee, from Granada Hills, California, was 20 years old when he was arrested in August 2021 and charged with first-degree kidnapping. Under a plea agreement, that charge was dropped and Lee instead pleaded guilty in March 2022 to second-degree kidnapping.

The Canyon County Sheriff's Office began investigating the case after the 11-year-old victim had been reported as a runaway. Investigators found cell phone records showing the girl had frequently been communicating with a then-unknown person with a California phone number. Deputies and detectives found Lee and the girl at a California hotel.

Detectives who questioned Lee determined that he met the girl through an online gaming program before the two began communicating by phone calls and text messages. Eventually, the sheriff's office said, an agreement was made that Lee would travel to Idaho from the Los Angeles area to pick up the girl and take her to his home in California.

The Idaho Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force has more information about keeping your children safe online. If you suspect a child you know is a victim of an internet crime, you can also submit a tip through the ICAC website.



Canyon County Jail

Nampa man gets 30 years in prison for participating in beating murder *ISPFS performed biology screening and DNA analysis in this case.*

Luis Garcia was dropped in a driveway with multiple blunt force injuries and later declared brain dead at the hospital.

Author: Alexandra Duggan

Published: 7:24 PM MDT August 17, 2022

Updated: 7:44 PM MDT August 17, 2022

[Nampa man receives 30 years for participating in beating death | ktvb.com](#)

Multiple people are alleged to have taken part in the beating death of 22-year-old Luis Garcia in 2021, but one of them was sentenced Wednesday -- Sergio Jimenez received 30 years in prison for second-degree murder and will be eligible for parole after nine of those years. After Jimenez received his sentence and the judge left the courtroom, a relative of Garcia's began to cry. "This is not justice!" she yelled.

Garcia was lured out of a Walmart in Nov. 2021, the state prosecuting attorney said, and there was some type of scuffle in the car he got into. Unknown men also called Garcia's father to demand \$2,000 in ransom money. Garcia ended up in a trailer home off of Sugar Street in Caldwell, where he was repeatedly kicked in the head by Jimenez wearing steel-toed boots. Garcia was also tied up, beaten with golf clubs and cut up with knives, the state said.

Garcia was later abandoned in a driveway with his head and face taped up. According to an affidavit, he was transported to the hospital, where he later died from his injuries.

Court documents say that police observed the house was cleaned up, ropes used to tie up Garcia were discarded, trash cans were missing along with some furniture and a trail of discarded items led out the back door. "There were so many impact points it was impossible to tell which one was the killing blow," the state told the judge on Wednesday. After Garcia died, his family chose to donate his organs.

Jimenez's defense told the court that he was nearly desensitized to kidnapping and crime after his father was kidnapped and murdered, and that Jimenez was used to drug cartel violence. "I can't see that he has had a life without tragedy," the defense said.

Garcia's father, Pedro Garcia, looked directly at Jimenez during his victim impact statement, where his words could be heard through quiet sobs. "I want you to seek God and get forgiveness for yourself," he said.

Another man in connection with Garcia's murder, Sean Anthony Tambini, was just found in Nevada on Monday and brought back to the Canyon County Jail. Tambini is being charged with first-degree murder and first-degree kidnapping for ransom.

Parma man sentenced for vehicular manslaughter in deadly 2021 crash on I-84

ISPFS performed alcohol and toxicology analyses in this case.

The May 2021 crash on I-84 in Boise involved nine vehicles, including a semi hauling 65,000 pounds of lumber. A 27-year-old woman later died from her injuries.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 4:58 PM MDT October 18, 2022

Updated: 10:32 PM MDT October 18, 2022

[Parma man sentenced for manslaughter in deadly 2021 Boise crash | ktvb.com](#)

BOISE, Idaho — A 29-year-old Parma man has been sentenced for vehicle manslaughter for causing a 2021 crash on Interstate 84 that involved nine vehicles and killed a 27-year-old woman.

Dalton Leonard was sentenced on Oct. 13 to 90 days in jail with the option of work release and 10 years of probation, the Ada County Prosecuting Attorney announced Tuesday. Leonard's license was also suspended for three years.

The fatal crash occurred on the morning of May 11, 2021, near the Cloverdale overpass on I-84. When Idaho State Police troopers arrived, they found a semi-truck hauling 65,000 pounds of lumber on fire in the median. Debris and wreckage from the crash was blocking nearly all traffic in both the east and westbound lanes. Investigators said the incident began in the eastbound lanes when Leonard made a sudden lane change and hit the semi that was loaded with lumber. The semi sideswiped an eastbound passenger vehicle before crashing into the concrete median, catching fire and striking a westbound semi that jack-knifed.

At the time of the crash, investigators said flying debris from one of the semis hit the roof of a westbound Toyota Camry. The impact knocked the female driver, 27-year-old Julia Goodwin, unconscious. Her car was located about a half-mile past the crash scene in a westbound lane. Goodwin was taken to the hospital following the crash and later died from her injuries, the prosecuting attorney said.

THC was found in Leonard's blood at the time of the crash. He was charged with felony vehicular manslaughter, aggravated driving under the influence (DUI), misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance and drug paraphernalia with the intent to use in August 2021. Leonard pled guilty to felony vehicular manslaughter in June.

"I extend my sincerest condolences to Ms. Goodwin's family," Ada County Prosecutor Jan Bennetts said. "The severity of the crash scene that day pulled the Idaho Transportation Department, Ada County Paramedics, and multiple law enforcement agencies from all over Ada County to help, and I appreciate all their work that day. Thank you to the Idaho State Police for their hard work handling this investigation."

Two sentenced to federal prison in firearms cases

ISPFS performed controlled substance and firearms analyses in these cases.

EastIdahoNews.com staff

Posted: Aug 17, 2022, 5:03 pm

[Two sentenced to federal prison in firearms cases - East Idaho News](#)

The following is a news release from the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Idaho.

BOISE — Two men from southern Idaho were sentenced to federal prison in separate firearms cases this week, announced Josh Hurwit, the United States Attorney for the District of Idaho.

Scott Arlis Thomas, 48, of Caldwell, was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 120 months in federal prison for the unlawful possession of firearms, ammunition, and silencers. Senior U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill also ordered Thomas to serve three years of supervised release following his prison sentence.

Thomas has a lengthy criminal history that includes three drug trafficking convictions and a prior conviction for unlawfully possessing a firearm. Due to his criminal history, Thomas is not able to lawfully possess firearms. According to court records, on July 24, 2020, law enforcement conducted a search of Thomas's shop in Caldwell. Inside, officers located four firearms and four silencers. Officers also located marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, and methamphetamine. The silencers were not registered to Thomas, as required by the National Firearms Act.

In a separate case, Juan Jose Sanchez, 31, of Nampa, was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 96 months in federal prison for the unlawful possession of a firearm. Senior U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill also ordered Sanchez to serve three years of supervised release following his prison sentence.

Sanchez also has a lengthy criminal history that includes convictions for aggravated battery, possession of heroin, burglary, and the unlawful possession of a firearm. Due to his criminal history, Sanchez is not able to lawfully possess firearms. According to court records, on February 19, 2021, Sanchez possessed a firearm while at another individual's residence in Nampa. Sanchez shot that individual in the leg during an altercation, fled

the residence, and discarded the firearm. Law enforcement responded, investigated, and eventually located and arrested Sanchez.

“I am pleased with the successful prosecution of these repeat offenders who posed a risk to public safety,” said U.S. Attorney Josh Hurwit. “It is imperative that we work to reduce violent crime by aggressively pursuing those who unlawfully possess firearms. The cooperative efforts of the federal, state, and local agencies that work together to combat these crimes make a real difference.”

The Thomas case was investigated by the FBI Metro Violent Crimes Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the Canyon County Sheriff’s Office, the Payette County Sheriff’s Office, the Caldwell Police Department, the Idaho State Police, and the Idaho Department of Correction.

The Sanchez case was investigated by the Canyon County Sheriff’s Office, FBI’s Metro Violent Crimes Task Force, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

CASSIA COUNTY

Declo man given 11 years for methamphetamine distribution

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Officials say they investigated multiple people for distributing methamphetamine between March of 2020 and 2021

By [KMVT News Staff](#)

Published: JUL. 25, 2022 AT 7:09 PM EDT

[DECLO MAN GIVEN 11 YEARS FOR METHAMPHETAMINE DISTRIBUTION \(KMVT.COM\)](#)

DECLO, Idaho (KMVT/KSVT) — A Declo man was sentenced to 11 years in prison for distributing methamphetamine, officials with the Department of Justice said Monday.

Melvin Misale Alcaraz-Valdez was also ordered to serve five years of probation following his release.

Officials say they investigated multiple people for distributing methamphetamine between March of 2020 and 2021 in the Minidoka and Cassia County area.

Officers found that Alacarez-Valdez was actively engaged in the distribution of the drug, as well as being in possession of large amounts of it. Four pounds of methamphetamine were recovered during the investigation.

Officials say the cooperation of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Idaho State Police, Cassia County Sheriff’s Office, Minidoka County Sheriff’s Office, Nampa Police Department, and Ada County Sheriff’s Department lead to the charges.

GEM COUNTY

Emmett woman pleads guilty to 2 felonies, but granddaughter's death a mystery

ISPFS performed field services in this case.

Ian Max Stevenson, IDAHO STATESMAN

Posted: FEB 16, 2022, 8:04 PM | Updated: FEB 16, 2022, 8:06 PM

EMMETT WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO 2 FELONIES, BUT GRANDDAUGHTER'S DEATH A MYSTERY - EAST IDAHO NEWS

(IDAHO STATESMAN) – TEN MONTHS AFTER 8-YEAR-OLD TARYN SUMMERS' BODY WAS FOUND IN A TRASH BAG, HER EMMETT GRANDMOTHER HAS PLEADED GUILTY TO CHARGES RELATED TO HER DEATH, THE IDAHO STATESMAN REPORTS. CONNIE ANN SMITH, 54, PLEADED GUILTY TO FELONY INJURY TO A CHILD AND FELONY FAILURE TO NOTIFY AUTHORITIES OF A DEATH, ACCORDING TO A PRESS RELEASE FROM THE GEM COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE ON WEDNESDAY.



Taryn Summers

The week of Feb. 6, prosecutors and Smith entered criminal mediation ahead of a scheduled trial in March. Mediation is a process by which all parties involved in a case voluntarily meet in an attempt to resolve all or part of the issues at hand. Smith's guilty plea, entered in court on Wednesday afternoon, could send her to prison for as many as 20 years, according to the release.

In what was initially announced by the Gem County Sheriff's Office last April as a case of a runaway child, authorities eventually located a body inside of a trash bag on the backseat floorboard of a Lexus. The vehicle was parked in front of the house in Emmett from which the girl had disappeared — Smith's house.

The body was later identified as Taryn Summers, based on DNA evidence, according to August court testimony from an investigator with the Gem County Sheriff's Office, Lt. Jason McIntosh.

Two siblings of Taryn's were reported as runaways in 2020, and the Sheriff's Office has said that law enforcement and family members have since made contact with them. Exactly what happened to Taryn remains unclear. On April 12, a preschool teacher named Mattea Smith saw Taryn sitting in the back of the Lexus when Connie Smith drove to the Emmett preschool to pick up a different child, according to the teacher's court testimony in August. Smith told the court she heard Connie Smith tell other children in the car to be "very quiet" because Taryn was sleeping.

Later that same day, McIntosh responded to a report of a runaway at Smith's house in Emmett. Smith told him that Taryn had disappeared from her room. Smith told McIntosh that she had "adopted (Taryn), or something like that," he said in court. A probable cause affidavit signed by McIntosh identified Smith as the grandmother of "TS," who was found inside the Lexus.

Smith also told McIntosh that Taryn had, at some point, defecated on the carpet in her room. Unable to clean up the mess, Smith told him she had cut out the carpeting and burned it in her backyard. She said she could not find the keys to the Lexus, which was parked in front of the home.

A search for Taryn covered multiple days before a patrol sergeant with the Idaho State Police found a set of keys on top of a cabinet in Smith's kitchen and used them to open the Lexus on April 15. After searching the trunk, another state trooper, Detective Sgt. Jason Horst, opened a back door and found a black trash bag. "I kind of got that feeling of what I'd find when I opened it," he told the court. "I immediately thought that it was the body of Taryn Summers."

Information on the cause of Taryn's death has not been released. The probable cause affidavit said vomit was discovered on Taryn's shirt and in her hair during an autopsy.

In January, when mediation was scheduled, Gem County Prosecuting Attorney Erick Thomson told District Judge Gene Petty that the state planned to "change charges and charging language in this case." The crime of felony injury to child, which was added to the case on Tuesday, is described under state law as a person who puts a child "under circumstances or conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any child, willfully causes or permits the person or health of such child to be injured, or willfully causes or permits such child to be placed in such situation that its person or health is endangered." On Wednesday, Thomson said the state has information about the death but will not discuss it until sentencing. "I know everyone wants to know what happened here, and that's not at this point in the proceedings appropriate for me to go into," he told the Idaho Statesman. A sentencing hearing for Smith is scheduled for April 8. She is in the custody of the Gem County Jail on an \$800,000 bond.

IDAHO COUNTY

Skull fragments found near Selway River identified as missing hunter

ISPFS performed DNA analysis to make this identification

Jessie Ferrieri, 21, was among six men riding in an SUV when it flipped into the fast-moving Selway River in 2018.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 11:48 Am MDT March 23, 2022

Updated: 4:39 Pm MDT March 23, 2022

[SKULL FRAGMENT FOUND NEAR SELWAY RIVER IDENTIFIED | KTVB.COM](https://www.ktvb.com/story/news/local/2022/03/23/skull-fragment-found-near-selway-river-identified/7018112002/)

IDAHO COUNTY, Idaho — Pieces of bone found along the Selway River in North Central Idaho belong to a 21-year-old hunter who has been missing since the SUV he was riding in plunged into the fast-moving water four years ago.

Jessie Ferrieri of Mahopac Falls, New York, was one of six men in the vehicle when it flipped into the river in May 2018 in a remote backcountry area about 60 miles west of Darby, Montana. Two of the hunters, who were from the state of Georgia, made it to shore. The bodies of two more, 21-year-old Koby Clark of Bozeman, Montana and 22-year-old Reece Rollins of Terrebonne, Oregon, were found in the Selway weeks after the crash. But Jessie Ferrieri and his brother, Raymond Ferrieri, remained unaccounted for, even after investigators retrieved the sunken SUV from beneath the river's surface. The surviving hunters told investigators that they did not see any of the other men make it out of the water.

According to the Idaho County Sheriff's Office, a section of skull and three teeth were discovered near the Shearer Airstrip in August 2020. Caretakers at the Selway Lodge found another skull fragment downriver from that area a month later.

The bones were sent to the Idaho State Police Laboratory for DNA extraction and comparison, and were determined to belong to Jessie Ferrieri. "ICSO again extends its condolences to the Ferrieri family," the sheriff's office posted. Raymond Ferrieri remains missing. The Idaho County Sheriff's Office is asking anyone rafting or kayaking the Selway River, or anyone backpacking or traveling alongside it, to keep an eye out for any additional human remains. "If any unusual bones are found, please secure those items and immediately notify ICSO or Idaho County Coroner Cody Funke," the sheriff's office posted.

JEROME COUNTY

Jerome man given 10 years for distributing meth in the Magic Valley

ISPFS performed controlled substance and latent print analysis in this case.

Judge Scott W. Skavdahl gave Rodriguez-Landeros five years of probation after his ten-year sentence.

BY KMVT News Staff

Published: APR. 22, 2022 AT 7:54 PM EDT

[JEROME MAN GIVEN 10 YEARS FOR DISTRIBUTING METH IN THE MAGIC VALLEY \(KMVT.COM\)](https://www.kmvt.com/news/local/jerome-man-given-10-years-for-distributing-meth-in-the-magic-valley)

BOISE, Idaho (KMVT/KSVT) — A Jerome man was given 10 years in federal prison for distributing and possessing methamphetamine.

Court records show 40-year-old Jose Luis Rodriguez-Landeros, a Mexican national living in Jerome, was involved in the distribution of the drug in the Magic Valley. Confidential informants purchased methamphetamine from Rodriguez-Landeros on three occasions, with some of those transactions taking place at a tire shop he operated in Jerome.

Rodriguez-Landeros was pulled over in December of 2020. Upon searching his vehicle, officers found over one pound of methamphetamine, a firearm, and other items of drug paraphernalia.

Judge Scott W. Skavdahl gave Rodriguez-Landeros five years of probation after his ten-year sentence.

KOOTENAI COUNTY

Spirit Lake man pleads guilty to murder

ISPFS performed biology screening, DNA, latent processing and comparison, and firearms analysis in this case.

By Kaye Thornbrugh

Staff Writer | MARCH 23, 2022 1:00 AM

[Spirit Lake man pleads guilty to murder | Coeur d'Alene Press \(cdapress.com\)](https://www.cdapress.com/news/local/spirit-lake-man-pleads-guilty-to-murder)



John Dalton

COEUR d'ALENE — A man admitted to killing his longtime partner last year.

John D. Dalton, 55, of Spirit Lake, pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of 56-year-old Tina Swor. "I killed Tina Swor," he said in court Monday. "I shot her." By pleading guilty to second-degree murder, Dalton acknowledged that he killed Swor deliberately but without premeditation. The crime is punishable by a minimum of 10 years in prison and a maximum of life behind bars.

The charge stems from last August, when friends and family requested a welfare check after they didn't hear from Swor for several days. Spirit Lake police found her dead inside her home. She was shot in the head at close range, prosecutors said. She reportedly died about two days before her body was discovered.

Police sought Dalton as a person of interest in the case. He was reportedly in a long-term relationship with Swor and hadn't been seen since the night of her death. Later that week, law enforcement received a report that Dalton had been spotted in St. Maries. A deputy with the Benewah County Sheriff's Office located and detained him. A search of Dalton's hotel room reportedly yielded evidence related to Swor's death.

After conducting interviews, Kootenai County sheriff's deputies obtained a warrant for Dalton's arrest. He was charged with first-degree murder, a crime punishable by the death penalty. Prosecutors argued for high

bond, due to the “vicious nature” of the killing and Dalton’s criminal record, which includes a misdemeanor assault conviction out of Oregon in 1995. Dalton was held on \$1 million bond.

As part of a pretrial settlement offer, Dalton pleaded guilty this week to murder in the second degree. In accordance with the plea deal, prosecutors have agreed to request a sentence of 25 years to life in prison. Prosecutors have also agreed not to file a habitual offender enhancement.

Dalton was charged with domestic battery, a misdemeanor, in Kootenai County in early 2020. He later pleaded guilty to an amended charge of disturbing the peace. A judge placed him on unsupervised probation for two years and ordered him to complete a domestic violence offender intervention plan. Dalton completed the program in March 2021, according to court documents. “I believe it did make me a better person,” he said in court last year, adding that he was applying the skills he’d learned in the program to his relationship with his girlfriend. Five months later, he killed Swor.

Dalton reportedly filed a claim against Swor’s estate in February, seeking interest in a Spirit Lake property that county records indicate was jointly owned by Swor and Dalton. The claim was denied based on Idaho’s “slayer statute,” which prohibits people from acquiring property or receiving any benefit as a result of killing another person. Dalton will be sentenced in July before First District Judge Lansing Haynes.

Hundreds of fentanyl pills, over a pound of meth seized by ISP

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

By Chanse Watson

Hagadone News Network | February 25, 2022 5:39 Pm

HUNDREDS OF FENTANYL PILLS, OVER A POUND OF METH SEIZED BY ISP | COEUR D'ALENE PRESS (CDAPRESS.COM)

COEUR d'ALENE — Hundreds of fentanyl pills and over a pound of methamphetamine were seized by law enforcement Thursday following a traffic stop at the base of Fourth of July Pass.

Idaho State Police tells the Hagadone News Network that two individuals from Montana were pulled over by ISP Cpl. Seth Green at approximately 4 p.m., on eastbound Interstate-90 near milepost 23 for a traffic infraction.

Upon making contact with the occupants, identified as Donald L. Winters, 57, of Montana and Robin L. Croskrey, 26, of South Dakota, it was determined that not only did Croskrey have an outstanding arrest warrant for forgery, but the two were in possession of a copious amount of illegal substances.

Cpl. Green explains that the duo had made the road trip to Spokane, Wash. from Montana, where they acquired approximately 350 “mexi blue” fentanyl pills and 1.5 pounds of methamphetamine with the intention of reselling the drugs.



After an inspection of the vehicle was completed, ISP also discovered marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and three handguns.

Both suspects were taken into custody without incident and booked into the Kootenai County Jail in Coeur d'Alene.

Winters is facing charges of trafficking methamphetamine over one pound, possession of fentanyl with intent to deliver, possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, and driving under the influence.

Croskrey is looking at two counts of illegally possessing a firearm, having an outstanding felony warrant, trafficking methamphetamine over one pound, possession of fentanyl with intent to deliver, possession of drug paraphernalia, and providing false information to an officer.

The State of Idaho currently does not have trafficking statues associated with fentanyl.

Green said that while the process of individuals driving from other areas of the country to the west coast to acquire drugs for resale is not a new phenomenon, fentanyl seemingly replacing heroin in this situation is. "They find it more plentiful and cheaper in Washington, Oregon and California, then move it east for a larger profit," he explained. "This much weight is not usual, but the trend has been around for a very long time. Fentanyl is definitely picking up and we're seeing less heroin, which is not a good thing in this case. That means they are switching to fentanyl, which is even worse."

Green is seeing fentanyl show up in busts such as these at least 1-2 times a week.

Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, and up to 50 times more potent than heroin. ISP Sgt. Jess Stennett explained on Episode 43 of the North Idaho Now podcast that "mexi-blue" pills are counterfeit versions of prescribed fentanyl that are shipped into the U.S. from Mexico. With little to no quality control in their creation, the amount of fentanyl can vary from pill to pill — creating a high risk of overdose.

Hayden teen receives maximum sentence in attempted robbery case

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

Author: Kaye Thornbrugh (Coeur D'alene Press)

Published: 11:28 am PST February 4, 2022

Updated: 11:28 am PST February 4, 2022

[HAYDEN TEEN SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IN ATTEMPTED ROBBERY | KREM.COM](#)

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — A teen who accepted a plea deal for his role in a drug deal gone bad received the maximum sentence, as reported by KREM 2 media partners, the Coeur d'Alene Press.

Ashton J. Creech, 17, of Hayden, pleaded guilty in December to attempted robbery, a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. In accordance with a pretrial settlement offer, Creech agreed to waive the juvenile court's jurisdiction and be sentenced as an adult.

First District Judge John T. Mitchell sentenced Creech on Wednesday to 15 years in prison, with four years fixed and the remaining 11 years indeterminate, plus 229 days credit for time served. That means Creech will be eligible for parole in about four years.

The charge stems from the fatal shooting of 20-year-old Gabriel R. Casper in May 2021. Police responded May 31 to the area of 23rd Street and Coeur d'Alene Avenue, where a motorcyclist had discovered a man, later identified as Casper, on the road in a pool of blood.

Neighbors attempted to render aid before first responders arrived, but couldn't find a pulse. Casper was later pronounced dead at Kootenai Health.

Witnesses said they saw a red Jeep speeding away from the scene after gunshots rang out.

Creech identified himself to police as a friend of Casper's, along with 18-year-old Coeur d'Alene resident Vadin K. Bartlett and a 17-year-old Hayden girl.

The three teens reportedly told police that Casper had planned to steal drugs from a Spokane dealer, 19-year-old Matthew J. Holmberg. Prosecutors said Casper arranged to meet Holmberg and 23-year-old Liberty Lake resident Dennen T.G. Fitterer-Usher in Coeur d'Alene to purchase illegal pills laced with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid more powerful than morphine. Creech and Bartlett agreed to help Casper steal the drugs, while the teen girl agreed to be the getaway driver, police said.

Bartlett and Casper were reportedly both armed with handguns when they got into the back of Holmberg's vehicle, a red Jeep Wrangler. Casper and Holmberg struggled over a duffle bag containing drugs, police said. Fitterer-Usher, who was in the front passenger seat, allegedly pulled out a handgun and fired at the people in the back. Casper and Bartlett reportedly told police they scrambled to get out of the Jeep and bolted.

Casper sustained gunshot wounds in his head, chest, arm and hand, according to court documents. His body reportedly fell out of the Jeep as Holmberg fled the scene.

The day after the shooting, Fitterer-Usher contacted law enforcement and said he killed Casper in self-defense. When interviewed by police, Fitterer-Usher said Holmberg asked him to accompany him to a drug deal in Coeur d'Alene on May 31. He said Casper and another person got into the back of Holmberg's Jeep and almost immediately pulled out handguns. Fitterer-Usher said he drew his own gun and fired, shooting Casper in the head.

After that, Fitterer-Usher said, he and Holmberg drove to Smeltonville to change their bloody clothes. They also attempted to clean the blood from the interior of the Jeep.

Holmberg and Fitterer-Usher are facing federal criminal charges in connection with the shooting. A grand jury indicted both men in late July on charges of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, as well as possession and discharge of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

Creech and the other teens were taken into custody on June 14, after police obtained warrants for their arrests. After pleading guilty to attempted robbery, Bartlett was sentenced last month to 12 years in prison, with five years fixed and seven years indeterminate.

First District Judge Lansing Haynes opted to retain jurisdiction in Bartlett's case.

That means Bartlett will spend about six months in a prison treatment program, called a rider, before Haynes either places him on probation or sends him back to prison.

Man gets prison for abuse

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

By Kaye Thornbrugh

Staff Writer | June 29, 2022 1:07 am

[Man gets prison for abuse | Coeur d'Alene Press \(cdapress.com\)](https://cdapress.com)

COEUR d'ALENE — A man who “tortured” a family through physical and psychological abuse will spend up to 20 years behind bars.

Travis A. Cook, 44, of St. Maries, pleaded guilty earlier this year to two counts of injury to a child, as well as to domestic battery in the presence of a child, aggravated assault and attempted strangulation, all felonies. He also pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count of injury to a child.

First District Judge Barbara Duggan sentenced Cook on Tuesday to 20 years in prison for the numerous offenses, with seven years fixed and the remaining time indeterminate. That means Cook will be eligible for parole in about seven years.

The charges stem from December 2021, when the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office responded to a report that Cook had spanked a crying baby hard enough to bruise.

A witness provided police with photos of the child's injuries, as well as an audio recording that depicted Cook attacking another child. Police said “horrifying screaming” was audible in the recording.

Evidence of other offenses surfaced after Cook's arrest on the initial charges.

A teen boy described to police multiple instances when Cook attempted to drown him, holding him down in a partially filled bathtub and forcing his head into a bucket of water.

Cook once slapped the boy hard enough to perforate his eardrum. He repeatedly put the boy in chokeholds and punched him with a closed fist.

A girl said Cook choked her multiple times. She described experiencing tunnel vision, saying she feared she would lose consciousness and never wake up.



Cook

Prior to sentencing, a woman told the court that her life changed for the better in December, when police arrested Cook. "I found the courage to call the police and shed light on the darkness we had lived in for many years," she said. She wept as she told the court about the decade of abuse she endured.

Cook slapped and punched her, kicked her, spat on her and repeatedly choked her to unconsciousness, all while blaming her for the violence he meted out. He threatened her with a gun many times, she said, and once shot at her head while they were in a moving vehicle. She hid her injuries with makeup and avoided seeking medical care for fear that others would discover the abuse. "All this while being told he is a Christian and the Holy Spirit is telling him about me," she said.

Cook reportedly "weaponized" the Bible's teachings, using his Christian faith to manipulate his victims and control them through fear. He once reportedly forced a victim to write a letter saying she was "a liar and an unrepentant sinner," which their pastor read aloud to the congregation.

"He took religion to another level and used it to dominate," said prosecutor Rebecca Perez.

Perez said Cook's conduct was "terrifying." "This is the worst domestic violence case I've ever seen," she said. "He tortured this family for years."

Cook sobbed as he addressed the court, expressing "sorrow and disgust" for his actions. "It just tears me apart each day," he said. Cook reportedly never denied the abuse allegations and refused to consider pleading not guilty. "I just wanted to come clean from the start," he said.

Before handing down the sentence, Judge Duggan noted that Cook's victims endured "years of pain, suffering and a complete absence of mercy." Duggan said the severity of Cook's abuse made prison the only appropriate sentence. "Your victims have shown remarkable resilience," she said.

Post falls gas station shooter sentenced to 30 years in prison

ISPFS performed controlled substance and firearms analysis in this case.

Author: Amanda Roley, Celina Van Hyning

Published: 12:21 Pm MDT September 16, 2022

Updated: 6:13 Pm MDT September 16, 2022

[POST FALLS GAS STATION SHOOTER SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IN PRISON | KTVB.COM](https://www.ktvb.com/news/post-falls-gas-station-shooter-sentenced-to-30-years-in-prison)



Sterkel

POST FALLS, Idaho — The man convicted of shooting two people at a Post Falls gas station in December 2021 before going on a crime spree will spend 30 years in prison.

32-year-old Tisen Sterkel was found guilty of multiple charges related to the shooting in early July, including aggravated assault and robbery.

The charges stem from December 2021, when Post Falls police responded to reports of a shooting at the Conoco gas station at Highway 41 and Poleline Avenue.

Security footage appeared to show Sterkel fire at least five shots, according to police reports, hitting one man in the neck and another in the leg. Both men survived their injuries. After the shooting, witnesses said Sterkel fled the scene in a gold pickup.

Police said he ditched the pickup and stole a different vehicle, before stopping again and forcing a man at gunpoint to switch vehicles with him. From there, Sterkel allegedly tried to hide in two different residences. Deputies from the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office spotted Sterkel driving along the railroad tracks near Highway 53. When Sterkel refused to stop, law enforcement reportedly pinned his vehicle from both sides, disabling it. Sterkel reportedly told police he had used meth on the day of the shooting and believed people had been following him.

Sterkel was originally charged with 13 felonies: two counts of aggravated battery, two counts of aggravated assault, two counts of possession of a stolen vehicle, operating a vehicle without the owner's consent, robbery,

burglary, attempted unlawful entry, unlawful entry, eluding and possession of a controlled substance, as reported by our news partners, the Coeur d'Alene Press.

He pleaded not guilty to all charges.

In July, Sterkel was found guilty of the following charges:

- Two counts of aggravated battery
- Aggravated assault with a deadly weapon
- Two counts of receiving or transferring stolen vehicles
- Robbery
- Operating a vehicle without the owner's consent

He was found not guilty of burglary.

Sterkel received a 30-year prison sentence on Friday with credit for the 290 days he has already served.

During his sentencing, Jason Griffin, one of the people shot by Sterkel, spoke exclusively with KREM 2 about the impact the shooting had on his life.

"I'm very thankful for the 30 years. I think that this is a really unique situation and I've lived in North Idaho my whole life," Griffin said. "Whenever it gets brought up in conversation, this is not something that's ever happened in this area that I can recall."

Man gets life in prison for crime spree

ISPFS performed fingerprint analysis in this case.

By Kaye Thornbrugh

Staff Writer | August 16, 2022 1:07 AM

[Man gets life in prison for crime spree | Coeur d'Alene Press \(cdapress.com\)](https://www.coadpress.com/news/local/man-gets-life-in-prison-for-crime-spreed-2022-08-16)



Spitzer

COEUR d'ALENE — A man who led police on a weeklong, multi-state manhunt and later tried to escape from jail received a life sentence.

Jesse R. Spitzer, 30, of Sultan, Wash., pleaded guilty in July to 16 charges, most of them

felonies, including four counts of aggravated assault, six counts of grand theft and one count of robbery.

First District Judge Lamont Berecz handed down a sentence on Friday of life in prison with 20 years fixed.

That means Spitzer will be eligible for parole when he's 50 years old. The sentence is the result of a Rule 11 plea deal brokered by the prosecution and defense. A Rule 11 plea agreement is a deal where the defendant pleads guilty to a certain charge in exchange for a certain sentence. A judge can accept or reject a Rule 11 agreement but cannot alter the terms.

In exchange for Spitzer's guilty plea, the state dismissed 18 charges, including three counts of unlawful possession of a firearm, as well as a habitual offender enhancement.

Spitzer was arrested in January for a string of burglaries and vehicle thefts in Washington and North Idaho.

The crime spree began after he was suspected of stealing a vehicle in east Snohomish County on Jan. 21.

Police and K-9s chased Spitzer into the woods near Gold Bar, Wash., the following day, but he escaped. He reappeared after a car crash in Chelan County, evading authorities again. After stealing a firearm from a vehicle in Post Falls, Spitzer led police on a foot chase and disappeared.

Officers from multiple agencies caught up with him in Kellogg the next night. He fled along eastbound I-90 in another stolen vehicle, reportedly shooting at police during the high-speed chase. Spitzer continued into Wallace, where he carjacked a couple at gunpoint.

Law enforcement chased Spitzer over Lookout Pass and into Montana. Near the town of Haugan, he reportedly threatened officers with a handgun and bolted.

Police arrested Spitzer after finding him hiding in a camper near the \$50,000 Silver Dollar Bar and Motel.

It wasn't Spitzer's first brush with the law. In 2011, a 19-year-old Spitzer pleaded guilty to attempted murder after shooting at a sheriff's sergeant while trying to avoid arrest in Nevada. He was sentenced to up to 22 years in prison. After his arrest in Montana, Spitzer was booked into the Kootenai County jail and held on \$1 million bail.

In April, he reportedly pried a leg off the metal desk in his cell and used it to smash the lock on the door. Upon noticing him outside his cell, staff locked down the jail and instituted inmate escape protocols.

Spitzer reportedly surrendered after law enforcement deployed sting ball grenades, rubber bullets and tear gas.

Judge Berez ruled later that month that Spitzer was unfit to stand trial due to mental illness. The court committed Spitzer to care and treatment at an Idaho Department of Correction facility. His competency was deemed restored in July.

Before handing down the sentence, Berez said Spitzer's crimes will have a lasting impact on his victims.

"It goes beyond money or loss of property," he said. "There is a violation of self."

Wallace resident Leigh Lutich Ligenza, whose car Spitzer stole at gunpoint, was present for the sentencing. "I know he should be incarcerated, but it was very sad," she said Monday. "He seemed genuinely remorseful and apologized several times throughout, even after the judgement. I remember thinking that I wished they had shot him that night. But it's not that simple anymore."

Though Spitzer will be eligible for parole in 20 years, Berez noted that there is no guarantee of release. "This is up to you and your willingness to engage in treatment," he said. "Should you not, you are a risk to society and life is warranted."

Branson receives life sentence for abuse of 7-week-old

ISPFS performed biology screening analysis in this case.

By Kaye Thornbrugh

Staff Writer | August 26, 2022 1:00 AM

[Branson receives life sentence for abuse of 7-week-old | Coeur d'Alene Press \(cdapress.com\)](https://isp.idaho.gov/forensics/)

COEUR d'ALENE — A man who admitted to grievously harming a 7-week-old infant received a life sentence Wednesday for the abuse.

Nicholas T. Branson, 27, of Hayden, pleaded guilty in June to injury to a child and forcible sexual penetration by foreign object, both felonies.

District Judge John Mitchell sentenced Branson to life in prison with 25 years fixed for sexual penetration and 10 years for injury to a child. The sentences, which are the maximum allowed for the crimes, will run concurrently. That means Branson will be eligible for parole in about 25 years.

In late March, Hailey N. Harris pleaded guilty to felony injury to a child for her role in the abuse and received the maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

A married couple, Branson and Harris were arrested in January after a monthlong investigation by the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office, triggered by a report of an infant with "traumatic" injuries at Kootenai Health.

A doctor who examined the child described brain injuries as "very specific to abuse" and "not seen in accidental head injury." The child had bleeding around her brain, according to court documents, as well as in the backs of her eyes and in her lower back. She sustained at least 14 fractures, including multiple fractures to both legs. Rib fractures consistent with blunt force trauma or squeezing appeared to have occurred at different times. Tests indicated liver damage, likely caused by trauma to the abdomen. Medical staff also discovered

trauma to the child's genitals, which Branson admitted to causing. A medical expert reportedly testified at Branson's sentencing that the genital injuries were the worst she had seen in a child that age. Physical evidence of child sexual abuse is rare, she said.

The child was reportedly discharged from the hospital in late December and entered foster care. The long-term impacts of the abuse are not yet known, prosecutors said.

Man shot by deputies convicted of threatening Dalton Elementary School, assaulting police

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

Garrett Cabeza, The Spokesman-Review, Spokane, Wash.

December 6, 2022

MAN SHOT BY DEPUTIES CONVICTED OF THREATENING DALTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ASSAULTING POLICE (YAHOO.COM)

Dec. 7—A 40-year-old man who was shot by Kootenai County sheriff's deputies in January was found guilty last week of threatening violence on school grounds and assaulting police with a deadly weapon.

The charges stemmed from a threat Robert J. Green made to shoot up Dalton Elementary School near Coeur d'Alene, and a subsequent standoff with law enforcement last winter, according to a Kootenai County Prosecutor's Office news release.

Authorities found multiple firearms and hundreds of rounds of ammunition on or near Green during the incident, the prosecutor's office said. An armed suicidal person, later identified as Green, was reported the afternoon of Jan. 24 in a residence next to the school, according to the sheriff's office. The school was placed on a safety hold.

Responding officers negotiated with Green for hours, during which Green allegedly threatened to shoot police and toward people at the Dalton Gardens school. The man eventually brandished a weapon at officers, prompting the shooting. Coeur d'Alene police described the weapon as an AR-style rifle.

Green was taken to Kootenai Health, deputies said.

A jury found Green guilty of three counts of aggravated assault on police officers with a deadly weapon and one count of threatening violence upon school grounds after a four-day trial that ended Thursday, according to prosecutors. The jury acquitted Green of one count of unlawful discharge of a firearm at a vehicle.

Green is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 26.

NEZ PERCE COUNTY

Demetri Ewing found guilty

ISPFS performed latent print, biology screening, DNA and firearms analysis in this case.

Jury deliberates for 3½ hours before convicting 17-year-old on first-degree murder charge

By Kaylee Brewster Of the Tribune Apr 22, 2022

DEMETRI EWING FOUND GUILTY | NORTHWEST | LMTRIBUNE.COM

A jury voted Thursday to convict Demetri Ewing of first-degree murder charges after a nine-day trial. The 12-member jury, consisting of seven women and five men, deliberated for 3½ hours and found Ewing guilty.

The 17-year-old Ewing was charged with first-degree murder after the shooting death of Samuel Johns on Jan. 8, 2021. Ewing's father, Clyde Ewing, also faces a first-degree murder charge and his trial is expected to start May 16.

There were about 40 people in the audience during closing statements and 50 when the jury's verdict was announced.

Second District Judge Jay Gaskill scheduled a presentencing investigation for June 9 and sentencing for June 16. Ewing was charged as an adult even though he was 16 at the time of the murder and could face up to life in prison.

Ewing stood up as court clerk Teresa Dammon read the verdict out loud, and he didn't show any expression on his face. Johns' friends and family cried and comforted each other after the verdict was read. A couple of people in the courtroom who came to support Ewing cried when he was handcuffed and led away.

"I am happy with the verdict and proud my office could get justice for Mr. Johns' (family) but this is just one defendant of two. My office is already focusing on the next trial and will hold Clyde Ewing responsible for his part in the murder of Mr. Johns," Nez Perce County Prosecutor Justin Coleman said in a written statement. "I would like to thank my Chief Deputy Prosecutor April Smith and the rest of my staff for their tireless work on this trial."

Closing arguments were also presented to the jury Thursday morning. Coleman outlined the case against Ewing. He described that on the night of the shooting, the Ewings had a plan to rob or burglarize the Johns home. Coleman said Demetri Ewing went to the home to "settle a score and he left there a killer."

In his 30-minute address to the jury, Coleman followed the murder from the beginning to the eventual arrest of the Ewings, starting in December 2020, with the search for a missing Army bag that belonged to Clyde Ewing's late father. Coleman said surveillance video from Walmart showed the Ewings purchasing items that included zip ties and black sweatshirts. During that time, a photo of a gun among other items at the Hacienda Lodge where the Ewings were staying was found on both Ewings' phones.

Coleman showed the route taken from the Hacienda Lodge to the Johns house on the night of the shooting, played video surveillance and showed the locations of areas where evidence was found along the path taken. A photo of Clyde and Demetri Ewing from Walmart surveillance video was shown as the 911 call made by Patricia Labombard was again played for the jury. Coleman then traced the route back to the Hacienda Lodge and noted other evidence that was left behind on the ride back, as well as items found during a search warrant. He also explained the charge of first-degree murder to the jury, stating that the prosecution doesn't have to prove the intent to murder or who did the actual shooting. The prosecution only has to prove that in this case, two people planned to commit a robbery or burglary, or another felony, and in the process also committed murder. In this case, the burglary included aggravated assault with a gun and kidnapping by using zip tie restraints, both of which are felonies. "It means it doesn't matter who pulled the trigger," Coleman said. "Demetri Ewing is guilty of first-degree murder."

Even though the prosecution doesn't have to prove who did the shooting, Coleman suggested that the amount of gunshot residue on Ewing as well as audio after leaving the Johns residence saying, "I shot him, Dad" pointed to Ewing as the shooter. "Mr. Ewing did this," Coleman said. "Now I'm asking you to hold him accountable and find him guilty of first-degree murder." In his closing arguments, defense attorney Lawrence Moran said the prosecution left behind broken promises in its burden of proof to the jury.

He stated that in the testimony from Labombard, she was insistent that the two assailants were a man and a woman. In police interviews after the shooting, she said it was a female voice and a woman about 5-foot-8 with an hourglass shape. Ewing was 5-foot-2 when he was booked at the Juvenile Detention Center. Moran said afterward she changed her testimony to fit the description of Clyde and Demetri Ewing.

"Demetri is not 5-foot-8, ladies and gentlemen," Moran said. "He's not a woman with an hourglass figure."

Moran also refuted the claim by prosecution of a robbery or burglary to find an army bag that Clyde Ewing was “obsessed with.” “Demetri Ewing wasn’t angry about a bag,” he said. “Demetri Ewing was a 16-year-old kid who couldn’t care less about an army bag.”

Although he said that the prosecution didn’t need to prove who fired the gun, Moran said the state does need to prove that it was either Clyde or Demetri Ewing.

Moran asked the jury to look closely at the surveillance videos provided by the prosecution of the travel to the Johns home. He described the individuals in the video as “ghostly figures” and asked the jury if they recognized Ewing in the video. He also questioned the decision by law enforcement to not look past the Hacienda Lodge for video evidence and the “dark colored clothing” description given of the assailants. Moran noted that in the video the figures aren’t wearing dark clothes from head to toe and asked the jury to look at the shoes. He also brought up the audio file mentioned by Coleman and suggested that the person talking may have said “Shot him dead.”

Moran reminded the jury of the defense’s expert witnesses who questioned the findings of the prosecution. He said that the DNA found on evidence did not match Demetri Ewing and the Idaho State Police Forensic Lab only found a match based on assumptions placed into the analysis software. He reiterated points made in cross-examination of Tara Martinez, a forensic analyst of latent prints for ISP, that she changed her initial report and she had not completed her certification when stating a fingerprint matched Ewing.

After Moran’s hour-long closing statement, he told the jury to make their decision on reasonable doubt. “If you conclude ‘yeah he probably did it,’ you must acquit,” he said. “‘Probably’ isn’t ‘beyond a reasonable doubt.’” Before closing arguments, Gaskill gave the jury instructions in reaching the verdict, including rendering its decision to the law that applies and that jurors could use exhibits and notes from the trial in the deliberation. By the third day of the trial, a majority of the jury was taking notes. Gaskill told the jurors there had to be a unanimous decision in finding Ewing guilty or not guilty.

During the nine-day trial, the prosecution offered numerous items of evidence, including shell casings, zip ties, a Walmart bag, and electrical tape and duct tape, all found at the crime scene, and connected it to the Ewings’ motel room at the Hacienda Lodge.

The prosecution also presented video surveillance from Walmart they argued showed the Ewings purchasing the items as well as video surveillance to and from the murder scene, starting at the Ewings motel room at the Hacienda Lodge in Clarkston. The prosecution also had expert witness testimony from forensic scientists on DNA, gunshot residue, firearms and fingerprints that pointed to Demetri Ewing. There was also testimony from witnesses at the scene and law enforcement who investigated the case.

Prosecution made its case that a dispute over a green army bag that belonged to Clyde Ewing, which he believed was at the Johns’ home, was the reason for the murder.

The defense cross-examined witnesses to offer a rebuttal to statements. It also questioned police procedures in the handling of witnesses, collection of evidence and the direction of the investigation, which connected the Ewings to the crime early on. Defense attorneys also discussed items of evidence that did not match Ewing, including the height of the shooter and DNA analysis from the defense’s expert. It suggested that a third person, not Demetri Ewing, was with Clyde Ewing at the murder scene.

However, the jury ultimately concluded that one the night of the shooting Jan. 8, 2021, Demetri Ewing, allegedly with Clyde Ewing, rode bicycles while wearing all black clothing from the Hacienda Lodge to the Johns residence at 1706 Seventh Ave., in Lewiston, in an attempt to retrieve a green army bag. They then entered the home, zip tied Patricia Labombard, found Johns and shot him twice, killing him.

They then fled the scene and returned to the Hacienda Lodge. After examining video evidence and gathering witness statements, the Ewings’ residence, Room 126 at the Hacienda Lodge, was under surveillance by law enforcement. The Ewings were detained on Jan. 12, 2021, by Clarkston police as suspects in the shooting and later arrested and charged with first-degree murder.

Clyde Ewing Found Guilty for 2021 Lewiston Murder

May 20, 2022 Updated May 20, 2022

[CLYDE EWING FOUND GUILTY FOR 2021 LEWISTON MURDER | IDAHO | BIGCOUNTRYNEWSCONNECTION.COM](https://bigcountrynewsconnection.com/news/lewis-ton-murder-2021/)

LEWISTON - The jury has reached a verdict in the second trial of a father and son accused of the January 8, 2021 shooting death of 31-year-old Samuel Johns in his Lewiston living room.

The trial of Clyde Ewing began on May 16. Clyde is being charged with first-degree murder. On Friday, the jury returned a verdict of guilty. Sentencing has been set for July 14.

On April 21st, Clyde's son, 17-year-old Demetri Ewing was also found guilty of first-degree murder. His sentencing has been set for June 16.

Investigators said the father and son rode bicycles from the Hacienda Lodge in Clarkston to the Seventh Avenue residence in Lewiston and entered wearing all black clothing and masks. The pair shot Johns in his living room, killing him, and then fled the scene. There was a female witness inside the home.

No murder weapon was found, but video evidence from surveillance cameras showed the pair allegedly traveling from the Clarkston motel to the vicinity of Johns' residence at the time of the shooting, and then back to the motel.

"We are happy with the outcome of the trial and couldn't be more pleased with how the cases came together," said Nez Perce County Prosecutor Justin Coleman. "It is my sincere hope that the victims family has some amount of closure. After a well deserved weekend off, my office will start preparing for the next homicide trial that is scheduled to start in July, State v. Brashear."

Lewiston Man Sentenced to Minimum Four Years in Prison After Molesting Two Girls Under the Age of 16

ISPFS performed biological screening in this case, DNA analysis is pending.

AUG 19, 2022 Updated AUG 19, 2022

[LEWISTON MAN SENTENCED TO MINIMUM FOUR YEARS IN PRISON AFTER MOLESTING TWO GIRLS UNDER THE AGE OF 16 | IDAHO | BIGCOUNTRYNEWSCONNECTION.COM](https://bigcountrynewsconnection.com/news/lewis-ton-man-sentenced-to-minimum-four-years-in-prison-after-molesting-two-girls-under-the-age-of-16/)



Dakoda Myrick

LEWISTON - A 25-year-old Lewiston man was sentenced Thursday to a minimum four years in prison after pleading guilty to two counts of lewd conduct with a minor under the age of 16, both felonies.

Dakoda Myrick, 25, faces an indeterminate sentence of 21 years in state prison if he is not approved for parole after the mandatory four years are served.

According to a probable cause affidavit obtained by Big Country News Connection, on March 20, officers with the Lewiston Police Department responded to a call regarding a sex offense which occurred at the Cedars Inn (1716 Main Street) in downtown Lewiston.

The caller, 25-year-old Dakoda Myrick, told dispatch he wanted to turn himself in for a molestation he said he had committed with two juvenile girls (between ages of 10-12). According to the affidavit, police arrived on scene and read Myrick his Miranda rights before he was transported to the LPD for further questioning. During an interview with officers, Myrick reportedly admitted to touching both juvenile girls over the past year. The incidents allegedly would occur when the girls' mother was at work.

The affidavit states that Myrick told police the last time it had occurred was one week prior, where he admitted to placing his hands down one of the girls' pants. Myrick also reportedly told police that both of the girls had performed oral sex on him multiple times.

According to the affidavit, Myrick also made statements to officers about how his urges to touch children can be "subsided for an undisclosed amount of time before they boil over." He also told police that he was concerned about being in public, as he did not feel he was able to control his sexual urges at times. Myrick was then booked on two felony counts of lewd conduct with a child under the age of 16 with bond set at \$500,000. Myrick would later enter a guilty plea for both charges. On Thursday, as part of the guilty plea agreement, Myrick was sentenced by Judge Jay Gaskill. Myrick faces an indeterminate sentence of 21 years if he is not approved for parole after serving the mandatory four years. He has been credited with 152 days served. A no contact order has also been put in place between Myrick and the two victims.

PAYETTE COUNTY

Oregon man sentenced to 30 years to life for firearm crimes in Payette County

ISPFS performed firearms analysis in this case.

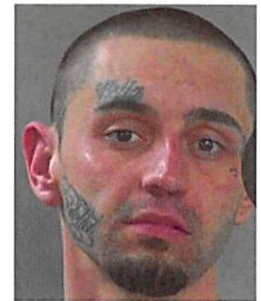
Gregory J. Escobedo, 29, was sentenced to 30 years to life in prison for shooting and injuring an owner of a car he stole.

Author: KTVB STAFF

Published: 2:05 PM MDT October 12, 2022

Updated: 10:21 PM MDT October 12, 2022

[OREGON MAN SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS TO LIFE FOR SHOOTING | KTVB.COM](https://www.ktvb.com/news/oregon-man-sentenced-to-30-years-to-life-for-shooting-in-payette-county)



CALDWELL, Idaho — Gregory J. Escobedo, 29, from Oregon, was sentenced to 30 years to life in prison on Tuesday for shooting the owner of a car he had stolen in Payette County back in March of 2021.

Escobedo was arrested after Canyon County Sheriff's Deputies responded to the area of Old Hwy 30 and Farmway Rd in order to find a car that had been stolen from a gas station in Payette County. When they arrived they found the car near Old Hwy 30 and Willis Rd. A pursuit ensued and Escobedo was later taken into custody without incident, a news release from the Canyon County Sheriff's Office said. Further investigation later showed Escobedo had shot and injured the owner of the stolen vehicle that Escobedo was driving when arrested.

According to the news release, the car stopped and the person inside confronted Escobedo, when Escobedo shot him. This shooting happened just six months after Escobedo was released from prison for killing his father, the release said. Escobedo was charged with felony aggravated battery with a firearm enhancement, felony unlawful possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and felony grand theft, along with a 'persistent violator enhancement' on all charges.

He was sentenced by Canyon County Judge Randall S. Grove to 30 years fixed followed by life in prison, the release said, meaning Escobedo will be eligible for parole after 30 years' time.

"There is no doubt in mind that our community as a whole is safer knowing that the defendant will be in prison for a long time," said Canyon County Prosecutor Bryan Taylor. "He is the epitome of a career criminal who has no regard for the people he hurts or damage he causes. I'm thankful he'll be behind bars for the foreseeable future."

TETON COUNTY

After four years and two mistrials, rape case is dismissed

ISPFS performed biology screening, DNA analysis and toxicology analysis. We additionally provided a breath alcohol expert opinion report.

Jeannette Boner, EASTIDAHONEWS.Com

Posted: Apr 6, 2022, 4:36 PM | Updated: Apr 8, 2022, 8:48 AM

[AFTER FOUR YEARS AND TWO MISTRIALS, RAPE CASE IS DISMISSED - EAST IDAHO NEWS](#)

DRIGGS — The felony rape case against Teton resident Ryan Berry has been dismissed by the Teton County prosecutor. The case is the longest-standing sexual assault case in the county's history with charges first filed in 2018. On March 15, after weathering a global pandemic, two mistrials, and a series of legal maneuvers that kept the case in play, Berry was free to go.

Berry, 42, was scheduled for his third jury selection on April 4, charged with the four felony counts including rape, destruction of evidence, supplying alcohol to a minor and video voyeurism. The case was dismissed by Prosecutor Bailey Smith after she requested a hearing with District Court Judge Steven Boyce on March 15.

She said in a follow-up call with EastIdahoNews.com this week that she would have liked to have brought Berry to justice, and was certain she could have, but the alleged victim in the case declined to participate this time around. Smith said she could not win the case without the alleged victim's participation on the witness stand.

"(The alleged victim) has endured more hardships and trauma in her (life) than most people go through in their entire lives," Smith said. "She has asked me to forgo retrying the case so that she can move on. That is a decision I have to respect."

The case has a long history in the Teton County Courtroom. Former county prosecutor Billie Siddoway was unsuccessful in nailing down an Alford plea in 2019 after Berry refused to comply at the final hour of the plea. Smith first took the case to trial in May 2021, but was thwarted when Judge Boyce declared a mistrial when not enough jurors could be found to serve. In June 2021, Berry was charged again with a felony for attempting to influence a potential juror. That case is scheduled for a jury trial in May.

The case went to trial again in July 2021 only for Judge Boyce to declare a mistrial after a Teton County jury of eight women and four men said they had received confidential evidence during deliberation.

To date, the case has cost Teton County \$19,336: \$17,836 in public defense for Berry and \$1,500 in jury costs. According to Teton County Clerk Kim Keeley, Berry's defense attorney Jim Archibald has not submitted his final bill for Oct. 2021 through March 2022.

"The county has done everything it can to bring this case to a conclusion," Smith said.

According to the Justice Department, less than 1% of sex assaults will lead to a conviction.

"Trials are incredibly stressful for victims, particularly victims of sexual assault," said Smith. "They have to sit in the same room as their assailants, re-live painful events, and have a spotlight shone on some of the most private aspects of their lives. (The alleged victim) is one of the bravest young women I have met, and I want to be clear that I stand by her in her decision."

Archibald did not return a request for comment.



EastIdahoNews.com file photo

TWIN FALLS COUNTY

2 sentenced to federal prison for distributing fentanyl pills

ISPFS performed controlled substance and latent print analyses in these cases.

[EASTIDAHONEWS.COM Staff](https://www.eastidahonews.com)

POSTED: AUG 22, 2022, 10:20 AM

[2 SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR DISTRIBUTING FENTANYL PILLS - EAST IDAHO NEWS](#)

The following is a news release from the U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho.

BOISE – Two men were sentenced to federal prison in separate drug distribution cases last week, announced Josh Hurwit, the United States Attorney for the District of Idaho.

Danny Eugene Smith, 28, of Twin Falls, was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 121 months in federal prison for distributing fentanyl pills in the Magic Valley. Chief U.S. District Judge David C. Nye also ordered Smith to serve five years of supervised release following his prison sentence.

According to court records, between 2020 and 2021, Smith distributed large quantities of fentanyl pills in the Magic Valley. On three occasions, Smith sold another person fentanyl pills at a store parking lot in Twin Falls. In October 2021, police officers obtained a search warrant for Smith's residence. Inside they found 5,578 fentanyl pills along with a 9mm handgun and large quantities of cash. In total, investigators seized \$123,505 of drug proceeds from Smith's residence. Officers also seized two vehicles which Smith had purchased with drug proceeds.

In a separate case, Heriberto Xavior Valencia, 24, of Phoenix, Arizona, was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 120 months in federal prison for distribution of methamphetamine. Chief U.S. District Judge David C. Nye also ordered Valencia to serve five years of supervised release following his prison sentence.

According to court records, Valencia drove to Boise, on October 20, 2021, to sell another person a half pound of methamphetamine in exchange for \$1,650. Less than three weeks after that sale, on November 5, 2021, investigators obtained information that Valencia was on his way back to Boise to sell additional controlled substances. With an arrest warrant in hand, investigators approached Valencia's vehicle at a hotel parking lot in Boise. Investigators executed the arrest warrant and searched the vehicle. In the vehicle they found approximately one and one quarter pounds of methamphetamine, one quarter pound of heroin, over 1,000 fentanyl pills, a jar of marijuana, and a loaded Glock pistol attached to a magnetic strip under the steering column of the vehicle, which Valencia was prohibited from possessing. In addition to the firearm and controlled substances, investigators found two children in the vehicle that had traveled with Valencia and two women from Phoenix to Boise.

"These significant prison sentences send a clear message to drug traffickers that they will be held responsible if they choose to distribute dangerous drugs to the people of Idaho," said U.S. Attorney Josh Hurwit.

The Smith case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Idaho State Police, Twin Falls Police Department, Twin Falls County Sheriff's Office, Minidoka County Sheriff's Office, and Cassia County Sheriff's Office, which led to charges.

The Valencia case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force consisting of officers from the Ada County Sheriff's Office, Boise Police Department, Meridian Police Department, and Nampa Police Department, which led to the charges.

Three men sentenced for conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, heroin in Magic Valley

ISPFS performed controlled substance analysis in this case.

Members of the Magic Valley group obtained the meth and heroin in Mexico and brought it back to Idaho for distribution.

Author: KTVB Staff

Published: 6:12 PM MST February 18, 2022

Updated: 6:16 PM MST February 18, 2022

THREE MEN SENTENCED FOR RUNNING DRUGS FROM MEXICO TO IDAHO | KTVB.COM

BOISE, Idaho — Three Idaho men are going to federal prison for their role in bringing methamphetamine and heroin into the Magic Valley.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Idaho announced Friday that 30-year-old James Tyler Ferguson of Jerome was sentenced to 10 years in prison, 41-year-old Jedediah Levi Dahl of Twin Falls was sentenced to 7 years, 3 months in prison, and 52-year-old Jay Dale Cummins of Twin Falls was sentenced to 6 years, 10 months in prison. Ferguson and Dahl will be on supervised release for five years after they complete their prison terms; four years of supervised release will follow Cummins' prison term. Chief U.S. District Judge David Nye ordered the sentences. All three defendants pleaded guilty to federal drug charges in 2021, and all had prior convictions. Ferguson was on parole at the time of his most recent arrest.

According to court records, Ferguson, Dahl and Cummins worked together with at least four other people to distribute the illegal drugs. The U.S. Department of Justice said the group obtained the methamphetamine and heroin in Mexico and transported it back to Idaho, to be sold in the Magic Valley.

According to Friday's announcement, Cummins was a courier who traveled to Mexico and returned with drugs in the Gem State on three occasions. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) said Cummins was terminated from the conspiracy. Ferguson then recruited two new couriers who traveled to Mexico to obtain the drugs, officials said.

While driving his motorcycle, DOJ said police officers stopped Dahl on July 11, 2020. Dahl was an active participant in the conspiracy, but was arrested due to an outstanding warrant.

During the stop and Dahl's arrest, police found methamphetamine, heroin, a digital scale, packaging material, and \$5,200 in drug proceeds. Three days later, on July 14, 2020, the DOJ said Idaho State Police (ISP) stopped a rental vehicle on its way to Idaho from Mexico. 34-year-old Belinda Jean Leverich and 31-year-old Erica Lyn Overton - both from Twin Falls - drove the rental vehicle.

DOJ said Leverich and Overton were both drug couriers and detectives found more than 2.5 kilograms of methamphetamine and more than 100 grams of heroin during the stop.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Leverich pleaded guilty on May 25, 2021 and Jan. 13, 2022. Judge Nye sentenced Leverich to 8 years, 4 months in federal prison, followed by supervised release for five years.

Judge Nye also sentenced Overton to more than 3 years in federal prison followed by three years of supervised release. Overton pleaded guilty on June 8, 2021 and Sept. 7, 2021.

DOJ said 39-year-old codefendant Ryan James DeRuiter of Filer faces up to life imprisonment and is scheduled for sentencing on March 16. ISP, Twin Falls Police Department, Twin Falls County Sheriff's Office, Idaho Department of Correction and the Twin Falls County Prosecuting Attorney's Office all contributed to the arrests and prosecutions.

Idaho Cold Case and Advanced DNA Methods (ICCADM)

The Idaho Cold Case and Advanced DNA Methods (ICCADM) is a multi-disciplinary working group that serves as the state Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) team. The team is currently comprised of representatives from the Idaho State Police, Rocky Mountain Information Network, Idaho Chiefs of Police Association, Idaho Prosecuting Attorney's Association, Idaho Sheriff's Association, Idaho Department of Corrections, Idaho State Association of County Coroners, Boise State University, the Idaho Statistical Analysis Center, Idaho Bureau of Criminal Identification and Idaho Attorney General's office . We recently received an approximately 3-million-dollar grant to assist with working cold case sexual assaults and sexual assault homicides as well as to collect lawfully owed DNA from convicted felony offenders.

SOLVED COLD CASES

IDAHO COUNTY

The Idaho County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify 1984

John Doe

Skeletal remains recovered in 1984 near the Powell Ranger Station in Idaho have been confirmed as Roger Brian Bennett, who went missing shortly after his discharge from the U.S. Air Force in 1982

Published April 11, 2022 by Michael Vogen
AFTER 38 YEARS, "MR. BONES" IS IDENTIFIED (DNASOLVES.COM)



In September 1983, Idaho County Sheriff's Office (ICSO) deputies investigated an abandoned camp near Powell, about 400 yards from the White Sand Road. The camp consisted of a nylon two-man tent, a sleeping bag, towels, cooking items, etc. Also found was a prescription eye glass lens. No identification was found with the items. Deputies searched the adjoining area and found nothing more. Deputies felt the camp had been abandoned sometime the previous year. The following year, in 1984, ICSO deputies were again in that general area in response to a human skeletal remains found by hunters. Deputies located the remains approximately one mile from the abandoned camp found the previous year. With the remains were a pair of silver metal framed prescription eyeglasses with one lens missing.

North Idaho Regional Crime Lab completed a composite image of John Doe's possible appearance, based on an anthropological assessment of the skeletal remains. At some point, John Doe began to be affectionately referred to as "Mr. Bones" by ICSO personnel, who felt he deserved some type of unique personalization. ICSO investigators over the years continued researching and working to find the identity of Mr. Bones. The case of Mr. Bones was also entered into NamUs in August 2010.

In March 2011, working closely with NamUs, ICSO sent Mr. Bones to the University of North Texas, Center for Human Identification, for another complete Forensic Anthropological Evaluation and DNA extraction. UNT determined that Mr. Bones was a 35-55 year old male, most likely of European descent with a possible admixture of Native American. His height was estimated to be between 5'2" and 5'11. DNA was extracted

from Mr. Bones and an STR profile was identified. The DNA profile was uploaded into CODIS but no match was found. Additionally, searches of missing persons did not reveal likely candidates for Mr. Bones. In November 2020, ICSO investigators learned that the Idaho State Police might be receiving federal funds that would pay for forensic molecular genetic genealogy. ICSO submitted Mr. Bones' case and received tentative approval. About a year later ICSO was told the funding for the program had not materialized. In January 2022, NamUs graciously decided to fund genetic genealogy testing and skeletal remains from Mr. Bones were sent to Othram's laboratory. Othram scientists extracted DNA from the skeletal remains and used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a genealogical profile for the unknown man. In March 2022, the Othram in-house genealogy team returned investigative leads to the ICSO investigators. ICSO investigators followed up on the leads by contacting a potential sibling of Mr. Bones, Cheri Pope in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Cheri confirmed she had a brother named Roger Bennett who disappeared in early 1982. Cheri and her mother, Wilma Q. Bennett, both provided DNA reference samples. The samples were compared with Mr. Bones by another lab, DNA Solutions, which used traditional STR testing to demonstrate a familial match.

Roger was born in Oklahoma City in 1955. He grew up in Oklahoma, graduating from Blanchard High School in Blanchard, Oklahoma. He enjoyed journalism and was a National Merit semi finalist. Roger enlisted in the Air Force and worked in a role involving mid-air refueling. He was discharged in early 1982. In the last letter the family received from Roger, he said he was being discharged from Keesler AFB in Mississippi and planned to travel to Houma, Louisiana to look for work on an offshore oil rig. Roger would have been 26-27 years old at the time of his disappearance. As an adolescent he had an interest in the Lewis & Clark expedition and wondered what it would have been like traveling with the expedition.

The services provided by Othram for this case were funded by the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). NamUs is a national clearinghouse funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice and managed through a contract with RTI International that assists the criminal justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. We are grateful to RTI, NamUs, and the NIJ for the support.

TWIN FALLS COUNTY

Idaho State Police Forensic Services and Twin Falls County Sheriff's and Coroner's Office Team with Othram to Identify a 2014 Jane Doe

An unidentified woman, found below the Perrine Bridge in 2014, has now been identified as Cynthia Gunnerson

Published October 12, 2022 by Michael Vogen

[TWIN FALLS JANE DOE \(2014\) IS IDENTIFIED \(DNASOLVES.COM\)](https://isp.idaho.gov/forensics/)



Twin Falls County Sheriff's & Coroner's Office, Idaho State Police Forensic Services (ISPFS), Idaho Cold Case Advanced DNA Methods Working Group (ICCADM), and Rocky Mountain Information Network (RMIN), a part of the national Regional Information Sharing System (RISS), funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), are pleased to announce they have solved a 2014 unidentified, deceased female case.

In September 2014, a kayaker on the Snake River found the body of a woman floating in the water below the Perrine Bridge. Twin Falls County Deputies, and Search and Rescue responded and recovered the body of the woman. Sadly, there was no identification on her body. After an autopsy and DNA samples and fingerprints were gathered, the woman, Jane Doe, was buried at Sunset Memorial Park, with a small gathering including members of the coroner's office, law enforcement personnel, and a few community members.

Twin Falls Deputies worked extensively to identify Jane Doe and the circumstances regarding her death. With the help of local media, the community was asked for assistance in identifying her. Investigators combed the area, canvased local motels, restaurants, mental health services, the bus depot, taxi services and truck stops. Her images and fingerprints were entered into national databases and facial recognition programs with no results. The woman was entered in NamUs as UP12926. Fourteen states reached out with missing person cases that matched some of the woman's description, but no matches were made. The case was actively investigated until February of 2016, and then worked sporadically until August of 2020 when it was deemed "inactive," with no new leads. The coroner's office listed her cause of death as suicide.

In December 2021, The Idaho Cold Case Advanced DNA Methods Working Group (ICCADM) contacted investigators and offered their assistance. In April 2022, forensic evidence from unknown woman was sent to Othram. Othram scientists used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile that could be used in a genetic genealogy search. Othram used forensic genetic genealogy to produce an investigative lead.

The investigative lead was return to law enforcement and the resulting information from this work gave deputies the information they needed. They contacted the identified parents who submitted their DNA for further testing. Fingerprint and DNA results from the Idaho State Police Forensic Services Lab confirmed the female's identity as Cynthia Gunnerson (a.k.a. Sasha Ergateage) from San Diego, California.

"I'm thankful for the hard work and diligence of our investigative team throughout this time, and for the assistance and collaboration of the ICCADM in solving this case, and being able to help bring closure to her family," said Sheriff Tom Carter.

The Gunnerson case is the second solved by the ICCADM. ICCADM is a resource for state, local, and county agencies to identify cold cases where advanced DNA testing methods (like Forensic Genetic Genealogy), criminal intelligence, and other techniques could provide new investigative leads. The group started in 2020 to assist Idaho law enforcement agencies in investigating unsolved sexual assaults, homicides, and unidentified remains cases when additional DNA evidence is available and DNA has been entered into the state or national Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), but no probative match was located. The group is administered by ISPFS, and is a collaboration with Idaho State Police, the Idaho Sheriff's Association, the Idaho Chiefs of Police Association, the Idaho Prosecuting Attorney's Association, Boise State University Criminal Justice Department, and the Idaho State Police Statistical Analysis Center. ISPFS recently received a \$3 million grant to fund the next three years of work.

"ISPFS is pleased that Idaho cold cases are being solved through collaborative efforts to bring closure to Idaho families and those throughout the country," said Matthew Gamette, Laboratory System Director of Idaho State Police Forensic Services. "The relationship between ISPFS, ISP, ICCADM, and local law enforcement demonstrates a tireless and unending commitment to solving cold cases. Our team looks forward to working with agencies and announcing more case resolutions," said Gamette.

Cynthia Gunnerson's parents are grateful to have answers about their daughter, and ask for privacy as they grieve her loss. The investigative team expresses their deepest sympathy and condolences to them at this time.