

Man Admits Selling Fentanyl-Laced Crack That Killed 3

COUNTY — A Rahway man has admitted to distributing a batch of fentanyl-laced crack cocaine that killed three people and hospitalized numerous others during a span of a single day a little more than a year ago, acting Union County Prosecutor Michael A. Monahan has announced.

George Rayford, 39, pleaded guilty on January to three counts of strict liability for a drug-induced death, a first-degree crime, for causing the deaths of 41-year-old Nicole Taylor, 53-year-old Kacina Vanderburg, and 67-year-old Harold Johnston, all Rahway residents.

A six-week investigation revealed that Rayford distributed the lethal drugs out of his home on the 1200 block of Whelan Place in Rahway on Friday, December 22, 2017, according to Assistant Prosecutor Michael Henn, who prosecuted the case.

The investigation — initiated by the Rahway Police Department and Detective James Crowell, and expanding to involve the Union County Homicide Task Force, Union County Sheriff's Office, and Woodbridge Police Department — revealed that an

unknown number of others also overdosed on the drugs that night, but survived, with several revived by the overdose-reversing drug naloxone, Mr. Henn said.

Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid many degrees of magnitude more powerful than heroin, was found in the toxicology of fewer than 20 percent of Union County's fatal overdose victims in 2015, but that figure jumped to more than 70 percent in 2017. Still, this case marked one of the first times local law enforcement encountered the drug mixed with cocaine.

Rayford was arrested at his home without incident in February 2018 and lodged in Union County jail. A Union County grand jury produced a 13-count indictment in the case about three months later.

The state will recommend a sentence of 13 years in state prison, with at least 85 percent to be served before the possibility of parole under New Jersey's No Early Release Act, upon sentencing, which has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, March 15 before state Superior Court Judge Candido Rodriguez, Jr.



A COMMUNITY MOURNS...Meghan Crilly of Fanwood, a teacher in Mountainside, has died of injuries she sustained in a hit-and-run accident in Linden on January 20. She is pictured here with her husky, Louie.

Teacher Dies of Injuries From Hit and Run

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

FANWOOD — Mountainside second-grade teacher Meghan Crilly, 35, of Fanwood, who was critically injured after being hit by an SUV while crossing North Wood Avenue and St. Georges Avenue in Linden on January 20, died last Thursday. Police are continuing to look for the driver who fled the scene in the vehicle.

Ms. Crilly, who was born in Rahway and taught at Beechwood School, had been hospitalized with traumatic injuries. Published reports

Bramnick: Jet Fuel Tax Would Hurt United

TRENTON — Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) is opposing a proposal to expand jet fuel taxes imposed on commercial airlines in New Jersey that he said will lead to higher airfare costs for consumers and businesses. The bill (A-4392) would subject all aviation fuel purchased in New Jersey to a four-cent tax.

"Telling United Airlines that we are going to require them to pay a fuel tax in my judgment is a very serious and dangerous message to an incredible worldwide company," Mr. Bramnick said.

indicated that her family had to make the difficult decision to take her off life support.

Police released a video of the suspected vehicle, a red 2014-2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee, rolling through the intersection at around 2 a.m. on January 20. Anyone with information that may help identify this vehicle is urged to contact Investigator Jimmy Solano at (908) 474-8505.

A number of comments were posted on the funeral home website, including from one of her coworkers, Cathy Zahn of Pennington, N.J., who said, "I will miss my ray of sunshine. She always had a smile and hug whenever and wherever I saw her."

Visitation for Ms. Crilly is scheduled for today, February 7, from 2 to 9 p.m., at the Lehrer Gibilisco Funeral Home, 275 West Milton Avenue, Rahway. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. this Friday, February 8, at St. John Vianney Roman Catholic Church, 420 Inman Avenue, Colonia. Burial information will be announced, according to the obituary.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, contributions be given in memory of Ms. Crilly to the Sharing Network Foundation, 691 Central Avenue, New Providence, N.J. 07974 or the Associated Humane Society, 2960 Shafto Road, Tinton Falls, N.J. 07753.

Senate OKs Bill to Aid Fed Workers in Shutdowns

TRENTON — Federal workers in New Jersey whose lives were upended by the longest government shutdown in history and who still live the threat of another closure would have some financial protections put in place under legislation sponsored by Senator Joe Cryan (D-20th, Union) and Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3rd, Gloucester) that was approved by the Senate last Thursday.

"The irresponsible government shutdown by President Trump has fortunately come to an end — for now," said Senator Cryan. "But, he could do it again in a few weeks and as long as he occupies the White House there is a threat of another shutdown that would leave federal workers without the paychecks they need to pay their bills. We hope that does not happen, but we should be prepared. Donald Trump's behavior is impulsive and unpredictable, and he obviously has no consideration for the hardship of federal workers."

The bill, S-3347, would allow for a special grace period on property tax payments for workers affected by the

federal shutdown. The grace period would be similar to what is allowed for natural disasters.

There are more than 20,000 employees working at federal agencies in New Jersey and more than 5,000 of them are employed by an agency without an appropriation.

"These are working people who are having an increasingly difficult time paying their bills and they don't know when this shutdown will end," Senator Sweeney said. "It puts a strain on family finances and causes real anxiety for those who are living paycheck to paycheck. This will provide a grace period on property tax payments that could ease their pressures."

The bill would allow taxpayers affected by a shutdown to have additional time to make payment on installments of municipal property taxes. Specifically, it would give them until the next quarterly property tax due date to make payments on any unpaid balance without accruing interest.

The bill was approved with a vote of 37-0.

Mountainside Announces 'Snow Buddy' Program

MOUNTAINSIDE — Mayor Paul Mirabelli has announced a new "Snow Buddy" program for Mountainside to pair volunteers with veterans, seniors and the disabled who need help shoveling snow. The program was developed in response to requests from residents who require help after a snowfall.

This program will pair two volunteers who are interested in community service with a resident in need of snow removal. The Snow Buddy volunteers will help the resident clear a driveway, sidewalk or areas around a fire hydrant if necessary.

"Mountainside's Snow Buddy program is a wonderful opportunity for young volunteers to help a neighbor in need," Mayor Paul Mirabelli said. "This is also a fantastic option for any community groups who are interested in lending a helping hand to our residents," Mayor Mirabelli added. "I would also like to thank Councilwoman (Rachel) Pater for taking on this initiative and working with our senior director, Kim Moriak, to launch the program."

"I would like to thank Caldwell Mayor Ann Dassing who provided valuable information on how Caldwell launched a similar program," noted Councilwoman Pater.

Forms have been developed for residents who are interested in participating in the free Snow Buddy program. Volunteers under the age of 18 will require a permission form filled out and signed by a parent or guardian. Snow Buddy volunteers should live within walking distance of the resident in need so no driving needs to occur. The Snow Buddies should also meet with the resident after completing the paperwork to discuss which areas need clearing after a snowfall.

Those persons interested in becoming a Snow Buddy or who would like to be paired with a Snow Buddy to help shovel and clear snow are asked to contact Ms. Moriak at (908) 232-4406 or kmoriak@mountainside-nj.com, or Councilwoman Pater at (908) 341-6764 or rpater@mountainside-nj.com.

Women of Excellence Awardees Announced

COUNTY — The Union County Commission on the Status of Women has announced the recipients of the 2019 Women of Excellence Awards. Eleven Union County women were cited for their outstanding contributions at the January 24 meeting of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

"For 27 years, the Freeholder Board has recognized women among us who lead, serve, and inspire. Today it is more important than ever to raise awareness about the influence of women in every sphere of the Union County community, from business and legal affairs to public service and education," Freeholder Chairman Bette Jane Kowalski said. "These awards recognize the contributions made by women who make a positive difference in the quality of life for everyone in the county."

The Union County women being recognized for their accomplishments by the Commission on the Status of Women are:

Amy Cairns of Summit, Government Service; Antoinetta LaVecchia of Summit, Business/Community Activist; Clea Carchia of Rahway, Arts/Graphic Design; Dawn McDonald of Scotch Plains, Education; Dr. Julia Grimes of Westfield,

Medicine/Health and Wellness; Iliana Chevres of Elizabeth, Special Needs Advocacy; Kay Coats Macrae of Springfield, Theater Arts; Marlene Olson Hamm of Rahway, Environmental Advocacy; Mary Zimmermann of Summit, Lifetime Achievement; Michele Dabal of New Providence, Humanitarian Activities; Sandra Jackson of Linden, Youth Advocacy.

The awardees will be honored at the annual Women of Excellence Gala Awards Dinner to be held Friday, March 29 at the Grand Centurions in Clark.

Each awardee will be presented with an engraved Women of Excellence plaque and a Freeholder Resolution in their honor recognizing their impact on the Union County community.

The Women of Excellence awards are sponsored by the Freeholder Board and the Union County Commission on the Status of Women with the Union County Office on Women.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Sebring, Department of Human Services, at (908) 527-4890 or esebring@ucbj.org or Jen Erdos, Secretary to the Commission on the Status of Women at (908) 527-4216 or jerdos@ucnj.org.

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