

Ethical Backstopping For Breaking News

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Associated Press

CHICAGO - An engineering student was learning about the criminal justice system Tuesday after police found a bound woman convulsing, a grenade launcher and a large container of hallucinogenic mushrooms in his apartment, authorities said.

Michael Petrelli, 29, also had marijuana, a fully loaded assault rifle, a loaded handgun, ammunition, lab equipment and some unknown chemicals that are being tested, Assistant State's Attorney James Del Castillo said.

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The most romantic of holidays proved fatal for 45-year-old Alicia Ramirez, who authorities say was stabbed to death early Monday <Feb. 14> by her husband in their mobile home near Des Plaines.

Cook County Circuit Court Judge Kay Hanlon set bail at \$10 million Tuesday for 48-year-old Heriberto Ramirez, charged with first-degree murder in the death of his wife who prosecutors say suffered 35 stab wounds, including a slashed aorta and punctured lungs. If convicted, Ramirez could face 20 to 60 years in prison.

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Four McHenry teens tried to have it their way, but police had other ideas.

Police said the four robbed a McHenry Burger King around 12 a.m. Monday, but were apprehended just minutes later.

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An elderly McHenry man died Tuesday after falling asleep at the wheel and crashing into a dump truck near Round Lake, officials said.

Richard Kutz, 86, of the 2300 block of West Fairview Lane was driving near the intersection of Illinois Highway 60 and Fairfield Road at approximately 1 p.m. when he crashed into the dump truck, Lake County Coroner Richard Keller said.

Kutz was alive when rescue crews arrived on the scene, but died shortly after from internal injuries at Advocate Condell Medical Center in Libertyville, Keller said.

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A man remains in the Lake County jail on accusations he sexually attacked a teenage co-worker in a Gurnee Mills clothing store last week.

Sampharn A. Peanpokven, 32, of the 100 block of Wren Court, Glendale Heights, was charged with criminal sexual assault in connection with the Aug. 29 attack, authorities said. He's held on a \$750,000 bail in the county jail.

Gurnee police Cmdr. James Caldwell said Peanpokven was working with the victim, a 19-year-old Waukegan woman, when he told her to clean the clothing store's restroom because other employees complained about it being dirty.

Caldwell said Peanpokven followed the teen into the bathroom and sexually assaulted her after pulling down her jeans and underwear.

"He kind of had her trapped in there," Caldwell said.

No one else was believed to be in the store when the attack occurred, Caldwell said. He said the teenager fled the clothing shop and reported the attack to police about 11 a.m. Aug. 29.

On Aug. 27, Caldwell said, Peanpokven inappropriately touched the teenager on the outside of her clothing while both were in the Gurnee Mills store. Peanpokven stopped at the woman's request and the incident wasn't reported that day, Caldwell said.

Peanpokven and the 19-year-old didn't have a dating relationship and met when she got a job in the store last month, according to authorities.

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Notre Dame student predicts his death in tweet

A Notre Dame student from Long Grove died Wednesday afternoon when a film tower he was on toppled over in high winds, according to the university.

Declan Sullivan, a 20-year-old junior and 2008 graduate of Carmel High School, was filming a Notre Dame football practice from a hydraulic scissor lift when the lift collapsed at 4:50 p.m. Wednesday, the university said.

The accident happened at the LaBar Practice Complex where Sullivan was working for the university's athletic department on their film crew, according to the statement.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to Declan's family and friends," coach Brian Kelly said in a release. "Declan was a diligent student worker in our video department and had a tremendous personality and great sense of humor. He brightened the days for all that had the privilege to work with him, and the Notre Dame football family will dearly miss him."

Sullivan sent two messages on Twitter and Facebook from atop the tower concerning the high winds less than an hour before his death.

In one message, timestamped 3:22 p.m., Sullivan wrote, "Gust of wind up to 60mph well today will be fun at work... I guess I've lived long enough :-/."

Later, striking a more serious tone, he tweeted, "This is terrifying."

The National Weather Service reported wind speeds of 33 mph with gusts reaching 51 mph at the South Bend Regional Airport at 4:54 p.m., just four minutes after the accident.

"We are deeply saddened by this tragic loss," said the Rev. John Jenkins, the university's president. "Our hearts go out to the student's family and friends and our prayers and profound sympathies are with them during this incredibly difficult time. The loss of someone so young is a terrible shock and a great sadness. Our entire community shares in the family's grief."

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

The university is providing grief counseling and pastoral care for students and has scheduled a special Mass at 10 a.m. Thursday at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the University campus.

She coulda been a killer dentist

A Round Lake Beach dentist is charged with battery after allegedly covering the mouth of a 5-year-old patient to stop the girl from crying.

Round Lake Beach Police Deputy Chief Rich Chiarello said Dr. Hannah Kim, who owns Grande Smile Dental, 978 E. Rollins Road, gave the girl a shot of novocaine prior to working on a cavity during an Aug. 30 office visit.

According to police, the Lake Villa girl started crying and Kim covered the child's mouth with her latex gloved-hand. After the girl's mouth was covered, she began to vomit, Chiarello said.

The child and her mother immediately left the office and called police.

Kim could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Her Chicago-based attorney, William Hale, said when the matter goes to court, Kim will indicate she followed the procedure she was taught when dealing with younger patients.

Hale didn't know how long Kim has been a practicing dentist, but estimated it to be several years.

Before opening Grande Smile Dental, Kim worked at West Town Dental Service in Chicago as recently as September 2006.

Hale has no knowledge of Kim previously being in trouble with the law.

Chiarello confirmed police have never had a complaint against Kim and have always had a good working relationship with the dental office.

Chiarello said Kim has been charged locally and a judge would determine any penalties.

"Dr. Kim gave a statement to the officer that was consistent with the allegation, and substantiated the charge of battery," Chiarello said.

The girl's mother, Sandra Morton, said she was at the Round Lake Beach police station Tuesday and urged state charges be filed.

"My daughter is absolutely traumatized by this," Morton said. "Thank God I was there. She could have asphyxiated on her own vomit. She could have killed my daughter."

Morton said the Aug. 30 visit was only the second time her daughter had visited a dentist. Morton was referred to Kim by her insurance company.

"She wasn't nervous before going. In fact, she wore her favorite sundress and was excited," Morton said. "After it happened, my daughter didn't speak for three hours. It was just a horrific experience for her."

The case will be in Round Lake Beach branch court Oct. 2.

"I'm not looking to get anything out of this," Morton said. "I just want to expose her (Kim). I don't want this happening again to anyone."

P.E. teacher attacks!

Two Wauconda High School students vividly describe a teacher physically attacking girls during gym class last week, but police say they're still trying to determine what happened.

Olivia O'Brien, a junior at the school, said she was throttled and shaken by P.E. teacher Tracey Wolff, who O'Brien said then pretended the confrontation was a self-defense demonstration.

"Everyone is telling me that she is going to be back soon, which horrifies me that (it) is even possible," O'Brien said.

Wauconda Police were called the day of the incident, but Deputy Chief Patrick Yost said no arrests have been made. He said Department of Children and Family Services rules prohibit Wolff from returning to school while police investigate.

Wolff declined to comment Thursday when contacted by phone. Wauconda Unit District 118 officials, including Superintendent Daniel Coles, board members Tom Weber and Maggie Liddell, and Wauconda High School Principal Daniel Klett also declined comment.

"Any matters regarding personnel or students are not publicly discussed," Coles said. "It's to protect both students and staff."

Klett said only that student safety was the school's "number one concern."

Yost said he does not expect charges to be filed.

"I can tell you at this time it is not looking like what (the) students told you is very credible," he said. "I would be surprised if there's a battery arrest."

But two girls in the gym class during the disputed events describe unprovoked violence.

O'Brien says she and another girl were doing push-ups with about 60 other students last Thursday when Wolff began criticizing them.

"She said, 'Women have weak upper bodies in general so you're not helping yourself,'" O'Brien recalled.

Then, she said, the teacher told her, "I'm going to pick on you now."

O'Brien remembers being confused.

"I didn't really know what that meant," she said. But before she could figure it out, she said Wolff was running toward her, eventually wrapping her hands around her neck.

"I could breathe but it was uncomfortable," O'Brien said. The girl said Wolff started "shaking (my) head back and forth."

"Then she took her arms off my neck and I grabbed them," O'Brien said, recalling she tried to fight off Wolff. The confrontation stopped abruptly, she said, with the teacher saying the events had been "a demonstration."

"It was intense," O'Brien said.

Then, she said, Wolff targeted a second girl, saying there would be another demonstration.

"She put her hands up in a mock predatorial kind of way," O'Brien said. Then, the teacher put the girl in a headlock and asked for a fight, she said. After the girl swatted at Wolff, the teacher smacked the girl in the face, dislodging her nose-ring and causing her to bleed, according to O'Brien. "That seemed bad to me."

Robyn Fulmer, a senior at Wauconda High, said she was one of many witnesses in the gym class that day and backs up O'Brien's story.

"There were two whole gym classes (that) saw it," Fulmer said. "I did tell (school officials) that I didn't think she (Wolff) should be coming back."

Fulmer and O'Brien both admit they have had problems with Wolff in the past.

And Fulmer said she has gotten in trouble at school and worries officials dismissed what she saw.

"I'm not really taken seriously," Fulmer said.

The girls also said they were willing to let the event pass if the teacher did not return to school.

"She's never gone off on somebody without any real warning," O'Brien said. "I think a lot of things about it are weird."

When police conclude their investigation, Yost said, they will turn over all information to the state's attorney's office, where a final decision will be made about filing charges.

"Ultimately, they would have to prosecute it," he said.

Expert says he wouldn't have allowed flight

The president of the Illinois Aviation Academy whose instructor was killed after crashing a plane in the Northwoods of Wisconsin Thursday said the flight was a dangerous one even for an experienced pilot.

Kevin McCabe, 26, of LaGrange, and his uncle Pierce McCabe, 68, of Hinsdale, were killed when a rented twin-engine plane piloted by Kevin McCabe crashed en route to the Lakeland Airport in Arbor Vitae, Wis., after taking off from the Aurora Municipal Airport.

Robert Werderich, president of the Illinois Aviation Academy in West Chicago, said Lakeland Airport is very difficult to land at and the weather conditions on the night of the crash would have made it even more challenging.

"It's in the woods, literally in the Northwoods, an airport carved in the trees," Werderich said. "It's not like you have a lot of room for big, expansive runways."

The accident is the third fatal airplane crash in the Lakeland Airport area since 2003, according to the National Transportation Safety Board.

Werderich said McCabe was aspiring to be a professional pilot and came to the flight school in the spring of 2009 to study to become an instructor. The company hired him in July 2009.

"He was literally willing to scrub the floors and airplanes - anything to get his foot in the door to get a flight instructor job," Werderich said. "He had a great heart and a great attitude."

McCabe was trained as a single-engine instructor and had taught about 30 students how to fly, but the plane he had rented to fly to the Minocqua area for vacation was a multi-engine aircraft, Werderich said.

Werderich said McCabe did not have much experience with the type of plane he was flying and that none of his fellow instructors at the school knew that he was planning the trip.

"It's a challenging environment for the best of pilots," Werderich said. "The weather when he made the flight was questionable. If we would have known we would have talked him out of it."

The area experienced heavy rain, fog and strong winds on the night of the crash, according to the National Weather Service.

The aircraft was reported missing about 8:30 p.m., and search crews searched throughout the night before finding the plane late Friday morning. The plane was discovered about five miles north of the Lakeland/Lee Field Airport in the Trout River near Minocqua, said Federal Aviation spokeswoman Elizabeth Isham Cory.

"As friends we would like to know what happened, but as professionals we want to hear what the (National Transportation Safety Board) will find," Werderich said.

Attempts to reach Kevin McCabe's family were unsuccessful.

Pierce McCabe served as Brookfield's village president from 1980 to 1989 and worked as a principal at Columbus East elementary school in Cicero.

It will be a year or more before results of the investigation are available, officials from the FAA said.

In 2003 four suburban residents were killed in a crash while taking off at the Lakeland Airport.

The twin-engine plane was piloted by a veteran American Airlines pilot from Naperville, but an engine failure during takeoff sent the plane into the trees, according to the NTSB. A husband and wife from St. Charles and a second Naperville man also died in the crash.

Alderman also accused of exposing himself in 2008

St. Charles Alderman David Richards was the subject of a public indecency complaint in May 2008 — two years before he was arrested on allegations he exposed himself in West Chicago, according to police records obtained by the Daily Herald.

Richards was questioned but not charged May 21, 2008, after a motorist called St. Charles police to report a driver exposing himself in traffic. Police said the witness declined to press charges, and Richards was fully clothed when an officer stopped his car.

In an interview, Richards described the incident as “ridiculous.” He said the caller was either mistaken or seeking revenge in a fit of road rage.

“I categorically deny anything happened,” he said. “There was nothing to this. That’s apparent because there was no action.”

Calls to resign

Richards, a 5th Ward city council member since 2001, has been asked to resign by Mayor Don DeWitte on multiple occasions since his July 21 arrest on allegations he exposed himself while driving on Route 64 in West Chicago.

In that case, Richards admitted to police that he briefly exposed himself in westbound traffic, according to a police report. But he denied a truck driver’s claim that he was inappropriately touching himself in plain view.

Now Richards and his attorney are seeking to have those statements suppressed by a DuPage County judge. The maximum penalty he faces if convicted of misdemeanor disorderly conduct is a \$1,000 fine.

“My intention is to continue to serve my constituents and the city of St. Charles the best way I know how, for my ward and the community at large, as I have done for more than nine years,” Richards said.

Prior incident

No police report was taken in the May 2008 incident. But a dispatch log obtained under the Freedom of Information Act identifies Richards’ license plate number and the date, time and location of a public indecency complaint. St. Charles city officials withheld the name of the witness.

By Richards’ account, “It was quite a stupid thing that happened.” He said he was talking on a cell phone and distracted when he inadvertently pulled his red Dodge Stratus out in front of a westbound semitrailer truck on East Main Street (Route 64) in St. Charles.

He said the truck driver honked, and he “kind of waved an apology.”

“By the time I got to my office in downtown St. Charles, the officer followed me into the parking lot and said there had been a call of somebody driving around with no pants on,” Richards said. “Obviously, that was not me. It was a misidentification of my car or somebody putting in a call to create some havoc.”

St. Charles Police Chief Jim Lamkin said no police report was prepared because Richards was fully clothed when an officer stopped him, and the witness did not cooperate in the investigation beyond phoning in the alderman’s license plate number at 2:46 p.m.

“There’s a significant difference between the current report (in West Chicago) and what we had in 2008,” he said. “We really didn’t have a complainant; we really didn’t have an offense. There was no evidence of public indecency.”

Mayor responds

DeWitte said Lamkin notified the city administrator’s office of the incident, but there was “no need” for further action.

That’s not the case now, he said.

“I have suggested several times to Alderman Richards that regardless of the outcome of this incident in West Chicago, in my opinion, it would be in his best interest to deal with this issue outside of his role as an elected official,” DeWitte said. “Mr. Richards’ continued participation in city council meetings speaks for itself.”

A former plan commission member and past executive director of the Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Richards, 60, is one year into his third term. He said he believes there is a “smear campaign” working to tarnish his name.

“This is hurtful, and I really don’t understand why someone would try to smear me or anyone else with something like this,” he said. “I really am disgusted.”