

Lawyer: Halt warrant, statements in Ables murder trial

By JOHN GUERRA
STAFF WRITER

The trial of Joseph Ables, the man who shot and killed Highlands County Sheriff's deputy William Gentry Jr. in May 2018, is more than a year away.

Ables, charged with first degree murder of a law enforcement officer and other crimes, faces the death penalty if convicted. Ables' defense team, consisting of lead attorney Bjorn Brunvand and his second chair, Debra Tuomey, recently filed two motions to suppress evidence.

A third motion seeks to ban courtroom spectators from intentionally or unintentionally showing support for Ables' conviction. The motions will most likely be

argued in advance of the Sept. 16, 2024 trial.

In her first motion, Tuomey asks the court to disallow a warrant to search Ables' Samsung Galaxy S4, black Asus all-in-one computer, and silver Hewlett-Packard laptop.

"To be constitutional, a warrant must set a nexus between the item to be seized and criminal behavior," her motion states. Tuomey says investigators want to search call history, text messages, instant messages, chat records, WiFi history, photographs, videos, GPS records, contacts, internet browsing history, audio files, voicemails, emails, and other data.

Tuomey argues that the warrant does not set a nexus to the search of the named electronic devices "let alone the entire contents of each device."

She asks the court to "suppress any and all evidence and/or information obtained from the three devices ... as a result of the illegal searches."

In a second motion, Tuomey asks the court to limit statements that neighbors made to law enforcement referring to alleged misbehavior by Ables that is unconnected to the shooting. One neighbor talked about closing her blinds so Ables can't see in their homes and other comments relate to Able's alleged removal of another neighbor's private hedge.

"It appears that the majority of the information ... is wholly irrelevant to the facts of the case and would simply qualify as bad character evidence and

ABLES | 4A

School day cardiac arrest



MEDTRONIC MADISYN: SUDDEN CARDIA ARREST SURVIVOR/FACEBOOK

Madisyn Miners (center) holds a sign that staff and friends signed. Madisyn passed out at class change on May 4 from sudden cardiac arrest. Thanks to the quick thinking of staff and students, Madisyn was able to return to the school to say thank you after a nine-day hospital stay.

CPR, an AED, and quick action by APHS heroes save student's life

By JESSICA SWAFFORD
CORRESPONDENT

On May 4 at 10:02 a.m., sophomore Madisyn Miners collapsed during class change at Avon Park High School. Some assumed she had slipped and hit her head.

Algebra teacher Melinda Pollitt was the first teacher on the scene. "Don't assume," she now warns. "When unsure of the situation, feel for a pulse as well. You must be observant. We thought it was a head injury, until we moved her hair and saw that her face was blue." Pollitt immediately reached out for additional help.

Kimberly Velasquez, assistant principal of APHS, had just finished a classroom observation when a student banged on the door, shouting, "somebody passed out."

"That's all I knew," Velasquez said. "I didn't know anything, but as soon as I heard that, I immediately pressed my [Centegix] button three times. I had not even assessed the situation, I just coordinated everyone getting there." Quick-thinking teacher Rachel Wood also pushed her Centegix button.

Within two minutes of Miners' collapse, help arrived, including school health aid Lilly Fuentes, LPN and geometry teacher Heather Knight, school resource officer Deputy James Brimlow, and deans Kyle Jackson and Whit Cornell. Immediately, CPR was



COURTESY/APHS FACEBOOK

As Madisyn Miners mom said, these are the heroes – the staff and students – who cared for Madisyn until EMS arrived and took over.

administered, with Brimlow, Fuentes and Knight rotating.

"She was one of my students," said Knight, an LPN of 12 years. "It was almost unreal, like it wasn't really happening."

"Her pulse was barely there," Fuentes said. "We all knew we needed the AED."

The school's AED (automated external defibrillator) was located in the gym, and as soon as the alarm was raised, a teacher handed it off to student Dorian Taylor, who blitzed up the stairs to the second floor to deliver it.

Within five minutes of Miners collapsing, the AED was applied by Fuentes.

"Bring her back," was all I was thinking, that's what was really going through my mind," Fuentes said. "I know Madisyn ... all that was on my mind was, 'bring her back.'"

The AED delivered an electrical shock, then it advised continued CPR.

School resource officer Deputy Todd Harris met EMS at the school gate, and by 10:15 a.m., the ambulance left the school, taking Miners to AdventHealth.

CARDIAC | 4A



Silent killer: Sudden cardiac arrest leading cause of death in schools

By JESSICA SWAFFORD
CORRESPONDENT

Sophomore Madisyn Miners survived sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) due to the quick actions of Avon Park High School students and staff, including CPR and the administration of an AED.

"She's a miracle that she survived," said Shawn Sima, impact director for Who We Play For (WWPF). "That's a true testament to Highlands County."

WWPF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education of parents and the public about SCA, and providing heart

KEY ACRONYMS

SCA — Sudden cardiac arrest: a condition that causes a person's heartbeat to stop abruptly and unexpectedly.

EKG or ECG — Electrocardiogram: a simple, painless, and non-invasive heart screening.

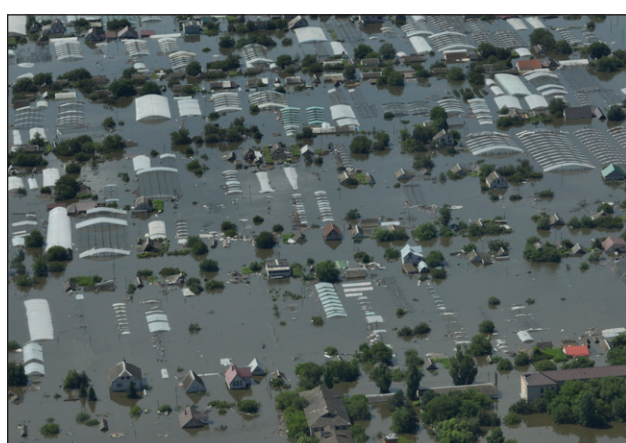
CPR — Cardiopulmonary resuscitation: chest compressions that help the heart to resume pumping.

AED — Automated external defibrillator: an AED can be applied to someone experiencing SCA to monitor the person's heart rhythm and give a shock if needed. AEDs are user-friendly, including pictures and verbal instructions.

WWPF — Who We Play For: a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education of parents and the public about SCA, and providing heart screenings for students. They also emphasize the importance of CPR and the presence of AEDs in schools.

SILENT | 4A

AP Exclusive: Drone footage of collapsed dam shows ruined structure, devastation and no sign of life



AP PHOTO

Houses are seen underwater in the flooded village of Dniproyny, in Russian-occupied Ukraine, Wednesday, June 7, 2023, after the collapse of Kakhovka Dam.

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — Exclusive drone footage of the collapsed Ukrainian dam and surrounding villages under Russian occupation show the ruined structure falling into the flooded river and hundreds of submerged homes, greenhouses and even a church — and no sign of life.

An Associated Press team flew a drone over the devastation on Wednesday, a day after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam on the Dnieper River. The buildings that remain visible above the rushing waters did not show damage typical of a bomb dropped from above, such as scorch marks or shrapnel scars.

Russia accused Ukraine of bombarding the structure, which was under Moscow's control, while Ukraine alleged that Russia blew it up from within.

The collapse of the dam in an area that Moscow has controlled for over a year and the emptying of its reservoir has irrevocably changed the landscape downstream, and shifted the dynamic of the 15-month-old

war.

In the images captured by the AP, most of the dam was submerged by the rushing water. Two nearby villages under occupation, Dniproyny and Korsunka, were also underwater up to the rooftops of homes and a bright blue church.

The rounded shape of dozens of greenhouses was visible over the waterline. The images were devoid of people, but AP journalists could hear the screaming howls of dogs trapped by the flooding.

The nearby town of Nova Kakhovka, also under occupation, was less touched by the flooding but equally devoid of people and animals. Its Ferris wheel was stopped and water lapped up a main street.

Ukraine has warned since last October that the hydroelectric dam was mined by Russian forces, and accused them of touching off an explosion that has turned the

FLOOD | 4A



Classifieds..... B3-5
Comics A7, B6-8
Lottery A2

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Sports B1

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Good morning To
Donnie Findlay
Thanks for reading!



SILENT

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screenings for students. They also emphasize the importance of teaching CPR and the presence of AEDs in schools.

"Madisyn's story represents something that happens over 7,000 times a year in the United States," Sima said. "That's 20 kids a day. Unfortunately, only 10% of those kids survive."

SCA is the number one cause of death on school campuses, as well as the number one killer of student athletes. According to WWPF's website, "1 in 300 youths has an undetected heart condition that puts them at risk for sudden cardiac arrest."

Sudden cardiac arrest is different than a heart attack. A heart attack is due to a blockage in the heart, while SCA occurs when someone's heart stops pumping. "Unlike SCA victims, heart attack victims usually experience symptoms such as chest discomfort or pain and remain conscious," the WWPF website explains. "Also unlike SCA victims, most people who have a heart attack survive the event. Most people experience SCA independently from a heart attack and without warning signs."

The first line of defense against SCA is identification: an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) is a simple, noninvasive and painless test that takes about five minutes and

can identify most heart conditions not detectable with a stethoscope. Therefore, WWPF recommends including an EKG in a sports or school physical.

Who We Play For does heart screenings throughout Florida, including in Highlands County. Over the past two-and-a-half years, they've found 130 children who passed every physical but had a deadly heart condition that required surgery.

Sima's experience is personal. His daughter only survived SCA because of a nearby AED and a non-medical passerby who knew CPR. Sima, a physician's assistant, said, "I've signed my name to thousands of physical forms clearing kids to go play sports and go to school, and I had no idea I wasn't doing much to protect them from dying."

CPR knowledge and accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are crucial in saving the life of someone with SCA. For a child under 15 years old, if CPR and an AED are applied within three minutes of the SCA, their survival rate jumps from 10% to 89%.

According to Sima, a person whose heart stops only has three to five minutes before permanent brain damage sets in or death. The national ambulance response time is 7 to 14 minutes, 20 to 30 minutes if in a rural area. "[If you know CPR], the person you're most likely to save is somebody that you love," Sima says.

WWPF also campaigns to enact legislation designed to keep students safe. Recent successes include Florida Law HB 7011, which requires all school athletic activities to have an AED and a person trained in CPR on hand, and Florida Law HB 157, which requires CPR/AED training in 9th and 11th grades as a graduation requirement.

There are grants and programs to help with purchasing AEDs, but it's not enough just to possess them. AEDs must be regularly checked and kept current. For most models, the batteries are good for four years, and the pads two years.

Highlands County is one of eight counties in Florida partnered with WWPF. The school district has 50 AEDs deployed at all 18 schools and the district office.

For more information on sudden cardiac arrest or to sign up for a heart screening, visit Who We Play For's website at www.whoweplayfor.org. A child's pediatrician can also be asked about an EKG.

Typical locations of AEDs in the Highlands County School District schools:

Elementary schools — one in the health room;

Middle schools — one in the health room, one in the gym, and two portable devices; and

High schools — one in the health room, one in the gym, and four portable devices.

OBITUARIES

James R. Stobaugh

James Robert Stobaugh, 86, passed away at home May 26, 2023. He was born in Davenport, Iowa, on June 15, 1936 to Walter and Irma Stobaugh. The family moved to Marion, Iowa, soon after. He attended high school in Marion, graduating from Immaculate Conception Catholic High School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He was united in marriage to Helen Courtney on July 7, 1956 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Jim was affiliated with Shell Oil for decades, first in Iowa, then transferring to Tampa, Florida in 1975 before retiring to Lake Placid, Florida in 1995 to fish and to play golf. However, still full of energy, he and Helen purchased the Lake Placid Liquor store on Main Street, plus AAA Self Storage. Full retirement came in 2018 when declining health finally slowed him down.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, who he loved beyond measure, plus his Iowa family of Courtney brothers and sisters-in-law, Tom (Judy) Courtney of McKinney, Texas; Mary Formanek of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Lucy Miller of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Frank Courtney (Mary Gene) of San Clemente, California; Dan Courtney of Phoenix, Arizona; Theresa (Gary) Jensen of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Phyllis Courtney of Cedar Rapids; special niece, Michelle Heggedahl of Rochester, Minnesota; and dear friend, Kevin Dixon of Lake Placid, Florida. He was preceded in death by his parents, and brother, Walter Stobaugh Jr., and brother-in-law, Mike Courtney.

Funeral Mass will be held Saturday, June 24, 2023 at 11 a.m. at St. James Catholic Church, 3380 Placid View Drive, Lake Placid, Florida.

Memorial arrangements are under the loving devotion of Michael A. Brochetti Funeral Home, Lake Placid, Florida. 863-465-9997.

Sebring council stands on PrideFest approval

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

The Sebring City Council Chambers was standing room only recently with those who were in support and those against the upcoming PrideFest event in downtown Sebring.

On May 16, the City Council approved the Highlands County LGBT+ Caucus request of the closure of North Commerce Avenue between Circle Drive and Pomegranate Avenue from 3-11 p.m. Sunday, June 11, for the Fourth Annual PrideFest to be held from 4-10 p.m. The council vote was 4-1 with Councilwoman Terry Mendel casting the "no" vote.

At the recent council meeting, Jeff Shoop, of the Highlands County LGBT+ Caucus, said he came before council to provide an update on Pridefest and the plans to conduct a "safe, secure and legal compliant event."

While a handful of Florida cities decided to cancel their Pride events, Sebring stands as a beacon of hope in this very dark time, he said.

To minimize risk, Pridefest activities remain a 21-and-over event, Shoop noted. Identification will be verified and attendees will be required to wear bracelets to distinguish event participants.

"Pridefest organizers created a zero-tolerance participant code of conduct so attendees understand the expectations and challenges of hosting this event as we navigate



MARC VALERO/STAFF

It was standing room only Tuesday night at the Sebring Council Chambers with many expressing opinions on the upcoming PrideFest event.

the vague language contained in SB 1438 and await legal challenges to this unconstitutional law."

Lake Placid resident Earl Claire said he reviewed the event's application, which the council approved May 16.

"It looks to me (like) you approved everything on it," including waiving the fees which makes it an event at the taxpayers' expense, he said. Council approved a variance to the Sebring open container ordinance, so there will be public drinking on Sunday afternoon during church hours.

"I am absolutely appalled," he said. "I don't believe the four of you would vote in favor of that. They are after our children, our grandchildren and you all ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

City Attorney Bob Swaine said Claire had asked council to reconsider its previous vote, which would require a motion and a second in favor of doing so.

Councilman Roland Bishop said he didn't think it was necessary to

have a re-vote.

Councilman Josh Stewart, in a prepared statement, quoted the Constitution's First Amendment.

"When each one of us was sworn into office, we took an oath to uphold the Constitution and the government of the United States and the State of Florida. That takes precedence in our role as City Council persons," he said.

"Every one of us has our personal and religious beliefs. To me, those end when I walk in the door. The Constitution comes first," Stewart said.

"I am not ever going to vote to infringe on the First Amendment rights of any group wanting to hold a lawful event," he said. "The City Council doesn't endorse any even by any private organization. What we do is approve road closures and other logistical items."

This is no different from the event, Sippin' on the Circle, that the Art League and Rotary did a couple of weekends ago, he said, adding this will be a small event compared to that.

CARDIAC

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She was later moved to Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, who praised the staff's quick response.

"All of the pieces really did save her life," said APHS Principal Karen Edsall. She explained the Centegix button is a rapid incident response system, and when pushed three times, it notifies all first responders on campus. Once the emergency button is pressed, GPS tracks the location of the pressed button. These are used for altercations, health emergencies, and lockdown emergencies. All first responders — the administration, the deans, school resource officers, and nurse — are notified on their computers and cell phones. Every staff member in the district has a Centegix button.

"Everybody has a role on campus, and everybody knew their role," Harris said. He and Brimlow each have 20-plus years emergency training, including CPR. "It was just very fluid, it flowed like it's supposed to. There were no errors, no issues, everyone did what they were supposed to do, and it worked."

Still in college, Fuentes said, "This event confirmed for me that this is the field I want to be in." She emphasizes that observation is essential. And in an emergency, don't panic.

For future emergencies, Edsall advised, "Never hesitate to call 911. When in doubt, push the



Madisyn Miners with her mom, Kristin, and little brother.

button, dial 911. We can always call back and say you don't need it. We'd rather have quick response. I encourage staff to push the button, and we'll come and assess the situation."

Miners is doing well, and is home after a nine-day hospital stay. The official diagnosis is premature ventricular contractions (PVCs), though testing is ongoing to find out why it happened. To stop this from happening again, she's on medication, has a pacemaker, and an ICD (implantable cardioverter-defibrillator).

Madisyn Miners' mother, Kristin Miners, is working with the non-profit organization Who We Play For to support education about sudden cardiac arrest in students. She feels parents should know how to prevent it, and that AEDs must be made publicly available for when it does happen. AEDs have pictures on how to use

them, talk you through the emergency, and time how long to do CPR.

"We owe our lives to [the staff and students of APHS]. I owe them my life," Kristin Miners said. "We appreciate everything that they've done. What they've done is honorable and should be recognized. They are our heroes. I will be thanking them for the rest of my life."

"We have 15 staff members on campus trained in CPR, plus the coaches," Edsall explained. "Next year, every single staff member will go through CPR and AED training during professional training."

The Avon Park High School would like to thank EMTs Christopher Cruz, Justin Keene, Donny Walker, and Jorge Santiago; ER doctor point of contact, Jeffery Sellers; and Avon Park Fire Department's Clint Culverhouse and Mark Ward.

FLOOD

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stream areas into a waterlogged wasteland. Russia said Ukraine hit the dam with a missile. Experts have said the structure was in disrepair, which could also have led to its collapse.

There were no signs typical of a missile attack

in the few remaining buildings.

The Dnieper River forms part of the front line in the war, and many people had already fled the area because of the fighting. Ukraine holds the western bank, while Russia controls the low-lying eastern side, which is more vulnerable to flooding.

Anna Lodygina, a Nova Kakhovka resident who

fled last autumn, said the flooding has paralyzed the occupied town, with markets closed, and limited electricity and mobile reception. The Russian soldiers occupying her family home, just 500 meters (yards) from the river, fled after the dam collapsed and neighbors have told her water now reaches the upper floor of the two-story building.

ABLES

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substantially prejudice Mr. Ables," Tuomey wrote in that motion.

A third motion asks the court to limit sympathetic courtroom displays for the victim and his family.

During an April 15, 2022, hearing that was well-attended by members of law enforcement, Tuomey said, she "observed multiple law enforcement personnel sitting in the gallery in full uniform," Tuomey wrote in her May 5, 2023,

motion. She asks the court to "enter an order excluding any and all spectators sitting in the gallery of the trial from wearing their police department/Sheriff's Office-issued uniform or other insignia supporting the guilt of Mr. Ables during any portion of the trial."

Gentry drove to a house in Placid Lakes on the evening of May 5, 2018 to investigate the shooting of a neighbor's cat, named Mr. Brown. The cat's owner blamed Ables for the shooting, so Gentry walked over to

Ables' house to ask him about it. That's when neighbors, who were at the cat owner's house, heard several gunshots. A trainee deputy discovered Gentry lying inside a screened-in porch with bullets in his head.

Ables blamed post traumatic stress when he admitted to shooting Gentry during an unsuccessful Stand Your Ground hearing last October. After a circuit court judge denied his self-defense motion, the Sixth District Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's denial.



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