

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women



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2003 Femicide Report Women and Children Murdered in Minnesota

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women monitors information about women and children murdered in our state to educate the public about the lethality of woman abuse and child abuse. We pledge to remember the women, children, and family members and/or friends who die each year from domestic violence and the woman and children who die while being used in prostitution - a system of violence against women and children. Women used in prostitution are battered women in need of protection from abuse. We also remember the women and children who were murdered by acquaintances, strangers, or unknown perpetrators.

We challenge communities to respond to battered women and their children by providing safe shelter and advocacy services, prevention education for all elementary and secondary students, laws to protect women and children, effective enforcement of those laws, and aggressive prosecution of all domestic assault crimes and all prostitution crimes targeting perpetrators, pimps, and "johns".

In Minnesota in 2003:

At least 14 women were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was a current or former husband, boyfriend, intimate partner, or household member, or family member of the deceased woman.

At least 11 children under the age of 18 were murdered in cases where the suspected, alleged, or convicted perpetrator was their mother's husband, boyfriend or intimate partner, or was the parent, guardian, baby-sitter, day care provider, or household/family member of the child.

At least 15 women or children under the age of 18 were murdered by an acquaintance, stranger or an unknown perpetrator.

At least 2 friends or family members were murdered in domestic violence-related situations.

At least 22 children have been left motherless.

WOMEN MURDERED:

1. Jane Samec, 46

North Branch

February 17, 2003

North Branch police officers witnessed the murder of Jane Samec by her estranged husband, William Samec, 45. At 1 a.m., Jane Samec called 911 to report that William was hanging around the house. When officers arrived, 10 shots rang out and Jane collapsed in the entryway of her house. An officer fired a single shot that missed William, who ran upstairs and into the bedroom of his 8 year-old son, who was hiding in a pile of blankets and stuffed animals. As the boy cowered, his father shot himself to death. The Samecs had recently separated and William moved in with this mother. Jane Samec had been granted an order for protection against her husband but police had been unable to serve William with the order because they couldn't locate him. One of the reasons why Jane called the police was because she thought officers could remove her husband from the property and hand him the protection order. In 2001, sheriff's deputies responded to a domestic dispute call at the Samec home. Jane left behind four surviving children, ages 19 and younger, including the little boy who witnessed the tragic event.

2. Sharlene Lussier, 37

Bemidji

March 17, 2003

Sharlene Lussier, 37, was found stabbed to death in her home, murdered by her husband, Frank Lussier, 34. Three children were home during the attack—Ms. Lussier's 11-year-old son witnessed the murder of his mother, her 12-year-old son called the police while hiding in the bathroom, and her 18-year-old daughter was assaulted trying to save her mother during the attack. "The husband...was standing close to the victim with a knife in his hand. He attempted to cut himself also," said Bemidji Police Chief Bruce Preece. Lussier told police: "I killed her. I want to die." Frank Lussier was arrested and was charged with first-degree murder. The criminal complaint states that Frank Lussier had a pattern of domestic abuse against his wife and other family members. He was convicted for third-degree assault in 1997 when he beat his wife and broke her nose, cheekbone, and injured her eye. He was also convicted of gross misdemeanor domestic assault on December 16, 2002, when he forced Sharlene to drive him to Red Lake, threatening her and assaulting her during the ride. Frank Lussier pleaded guilty in October of 2003 to a charge of first-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison.

3. Karen Schmidt, 46

Oakdale

March 17, 2003

Tim Dalby, 40, of Shevlin, was charged with first-degree manslaughter in the death of his girlfriend in her Oakdale home. Dalby stated that he and Schmidt had argued on the night of March 17 and that they had been drinking. He said that he pushed Karen into a couch before leaving her home. Schmidt's father, Richard Anderson, said he checked on his daughter that evening and found her lying on the floor. He told police he walked her to the couch. She was drunk and unable to talk to him, he said. Anderson said he found Karen dead the next morning on the couch. The autopsy showed that Schmidt died of brain injuries consistent with a blow to the back of the head. Tests of the level of alcohol in Karen Schmidt's blood showed she lived for some time after receiving the head injury.

4. Megan Fischer, 27**Minneapolis****March 22, 2003**

Megan Fischer, 27, was planning to attend a wedding with her mother. Instead, Irene Schneider received a phone call from a relative of Megan's roommate: "Please call. It's an emergency." Megan was found dead in her apartment of injuries inflicted by a sharp knife. Police arrested Pierre Leake, 29, in the killing. He was charged with second-degree murder. The suspect has two sexual assault convictions and had known the victim, with whom he had worked and dated over two years ago. There was no sign of a break-in or forced entry into Megan's apartment. Megan had recently completed culinary school and worked as a chef at a St. Paul nursing home. "She loved working with senior citizens and they loved her," said her mother. "She was so full of life, bubbly, energetic." Pierre Leake was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole in October of 2003.

5. Katharina Franz, 23**Minneapolis****March 26, 2003**

Katharina Franz died after being stabbed in a boarding house in Minneapolis' Whittier neighborhood. Police responded to a 911 call from a man who said he might have killed somebody. When they arrived, they found Franz unresponsive on the floor next to a knife with blood on it. A second bloody knife was found on a kitchen counter. Franz had stab wounds to her chest, abdomen, left leg and left arm. She was pronounced dead at the hospital. Katharina's boyfriend, Elise Tekle, 22, was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. He told police that Katharina would not listen to his advice and that they argued all the time. In December, Tekle pleaded guilty to second-degree unintentional murder. He will be sentenced in January to 18 years and 9 months in prison. It is 6 years and 3 months longer than sentencing guidelines.

6. Shemeka Lott, 20**St. Paul****April 25, 2003**

Tyress Nicole Wiley, 20, was arrested after stabbing her girlfriend to death. Wiley told St. Paul police that Shemeka Lott, 20, had been her intimate partner and that the two had broken up two months ago after Wiley had begun a relationship with a man. She and Lott had reconciled the week of the murder. Wiley and Lott got into an argument on the night of the murder. Wiley got two steak knives and stabbed Lott multiple times, according to the criminal complaint. Tyress Wiley originally lied to police and said that Lott had come to her apartment already bleeding from stab wounds but later changed her story and admitted to stabbing Shemeka Lott. Shemeka's mother, Kenae Lott said her daughter and Wiley and Wiley's two children had been at her house earlier Saturday and all left together to go to Wiley's apartment. "Everything was fine," Kenae Lott said. "They were holding hands and everything was nice. I would never have thought in a million years the night would have ended like that." Wiley's mother, Tyra, called Kenae Lott on Sunday. "We cried together on the phone," Lott said. "She kept telling me how sorry she was her daughter did this. We both lost our daughters in two different ways, even though she'll be able to see her daughter again. I never will." Tyress Wiley pleaded guilty to unintentional second-degree murder and was sentenced to ten years.

7. Jullie Bottema, 42**Minneapolis****May 12, 2003**

Jullie Bottema wanted to move out of the house she shared with James Johnson, so on May 12 she returned to the house with a friend to get some of her belongings. Her friend, Robert Horton, told police that Jullie was upstairs with Johnson, 53, when a loud argument began, followed by a single gunshot.

Horton said he saw Johnson back out of the room holding a gun. As he turned to run he heard another gunshot. Police said they found Jullie's body in an upstairs bedroom, dead from a gunshot to the head. James Johnson was injured from a gunshot wound to his head. He was treated at the hospital and made a full recovery. He was charged with second-degree murder in the death of Jullie Bottema and sentenced to 25 years.

8. Olga Yolanda Vasquez-Young, 41 Minneapolis May 13, 2003

Police found Olga Vasquez-Young, 41, in her bed, dead of gunshot wounds to her face and neck. Her boyfriend, Mario G. Hernandez, 66, was also found, critically wounded in the head from a self-inflicted gunshot. According to the criminal complaint, Vasquez-Young's roommate heard her say, "Mario, no! I had nothing to do with that," and then heard gunshots. Police determined that Hernandez had murdered Olga and then attempted suicide with his gun. He was found with a small black handgun on his chest. Mario Hernandez died at Hennepin County Medical Center on June 4, 2003.

9. Deborah Miller, 49 Whited Township August 12, 2003

A mentally handicapped gun collector was arrested in the shooting death of his mother and the wounding of his father and stepmother. Kanabec County Sheriff Steve Schulz stated that Ryan Miller, 26, shot his mother in the head with a rifle in her Whited Township home and then walked to his father's home, which was less than a mile away, shot his father, Randolph Miller, outside his house and his stepmother, Laurie Miller, as they tried to escape by car. Both the father and the stepmother survived the attack. Ryan Miller was arrested without incident several hours after the attacks while lying on the living room floor of his father's house. In a court statement three years ago, Deborah Miller said her son was disabled and "emotionally, physically, and socially delayed from the seizures, surgery, and medications" he had experienced. Ryan began to have seizures at age 2 ½ and had surgery to remove part of his brain at the age of 10, because medication could not control his seizures. A neighbor said that Miller "loved guns and loved collecting old ones." Several neighbors said that they frequently heard shooting on the Millers' property. No motive for the murder and the assaults was given. Ryan Miller was charged with intentional second-degree murder in his mother's death and attempted first-degree murder in the shooting of his father and stepmother.

10. Cheryl Molacek, 57 Maple Grove August 30, 2003

Jason Molacek, 19, was charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of his mother, Cheryl Molacek, 57. On June 11, Cheryl returned from work and was shot by her son at close range in the abdomen. Jason was apprehended in his back yard with the hunting rifle used to murder his mother. She remained in the hospital in critical condition and died on August 30 after her lungs and kidneys failed. Jason told investigators that he had thought about killing his parents before. He suffers from bipolar disorder. Police reports show that he tried to kill himself by cutting his arms after telling his mother he wanted to kill her in April 2001. Richard Molacek said of his wife, "She was the best person in the world to get along with, friendly and warm. She was not just my wife, she was my friend too." Jason Molacek was found guilty of second-degree intentional murder in December 2003. Because of Jason's mental illness, Judge Jack Nordby delayed sentencing after he stated he did not want to send Molacek to prison for 25½ years, nor did he want to give him probation. He asked the defense attorney and the assistant county attorney to come up with an alternative plan where Molacek could be placed in a custodial treatment program instead of prison.

11. Mee Vue, 60**St. Paul****September 2, 2003**

Police arrived at an East Side of St. Paul home to find Mee Vue, 60, dead and her husband, Chia Shoua Thao, 53, injured in an apparent suicide attempt. "He was injured, she had already died, and there were signs of a struggle in the house," said Sargent Jane Laurence, the lead homicide detective in the case. Police learned that the couple was having marital problems and that Mee Vue had moved out of the home as recently as last week. On the day of her murder she returned to her former home to pick up some belongings. Police have stated that weapons were recovered in the house but declined to say how Mee Vue died or what type of injuries Chia Shoua Thao had sustained. Thao was convicted with second-degree murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

12. Alyssa Hendrickson, 26**Minneapolis****November 6, 2003**

Rashel Richart, 25, was charged with first- and second-degree murder in the shooting death of her roommate, Alyssa Hendrickson, 26. Police responded to a shots-fired call around 12:25 a.m. and found Alyssa lying in a pool of blood. At first, Richart told officers that a stranger had shot Alyssa. Others at the house told an officer that Richart was alone in the kitchen with Hendrickson when she was shot. When they heard the shot, they ran to the kitchen and found Richart with a gun in her hand standing over Hendrickson. Police later found a .25-caliber semiautomatic in a bedroom dresser drawer. Richart later told police that she shot Hendrickson but that she was fooling around with the gun and didn't think it was loaded. Hendrickson died from a head wound at Hennepin County Medical Center. Richart was convicted of second-degree manslaughter and sentenced to 4 years.

13. Amber Gross, 19**Bemidji****November 15, 2003**

Amber Gross was shot to death by Wade Jenkauski, 19, who subsequently attempted suicide. Bemidji police received a 911 call with some sounds but no words. Authorities responded to the residence where the call originated and found Amber in the bathroom, dead from a gunshot wound. Police then spotted Jenkauski crawling naked on the bedroom floor, with part of his head blown away by a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He was in critical condition at St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth. Amber's mother stated in an interview, "She was a hard worker. She was a certified nurse's aid. It's a tragedy. It was a bad relationship from the start." She stated that Jenkauski was abusive towards her daughter. Wade Jenkauski pleaded guilty to second-degree homicide and was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

14. Lou Thao, 35**St. Paul****December 2, 2003**

Lou Thao died at Regions Hospital of extensive injuries received when the car she was riding in hit a tree on White Bear Avenue. Her estranged husband, Nao Lee Yang, 46, had engaged Thao and another man, who was driving the car, in a high-speed chase and rammed his car into the one Thao was riding in, sending it into the tree. Yang died at the scene and the driver of Thao's car received minor injuries. Police have said that they had been to Thao and Yang's home 10 times for various reasons over the past four years. In February 2000, Yang was arrested for domestic abuse against his wife. While applying for an order for protection in Ramsey County District Court, Lou detailed how her husband of 15 years often threatened to kill her and then himself. Lou Thao leaves 9 children orphaned, ages 7 to 18. Relatives have stated that they will raise the children and a fund has been set up to help them. "We haven't figured out

what to do with the children,” said Sao Yang, the couple’s uncle. “We know that they are going through a lot of difficulties right now. We don’t want them to worry about where they are going to live after this.”

CHILDREN MURDERED:

1. Cameron D’Anthony Norris, 3 Brooklyn Center

February 7, 2003

Brooklyn Center police responded to a call about a baby not breathing and found Cameron Norris in cardiac arrest and with bruises all over his body. Cameron was taken to North Memorial Medical Center, where he was placed on life support and died the following morning. Samuel Jones, 21, had been caring for the little boy while his mother worked and told police that Cameron had fallen off the kitchen counter and injured his head. Jones also stated that because he knew that a small child with a head injury needed to be closely watched, he put Cameron to bed and checked on him around midnight. Jones told the investigators that when he couldn’t wake Cameron, he called his mother, who came to the apartment and called 911. Jones stated that Cameron’s bruises came from his beating the little boy with a slipper. He stated that he had beaten Cameron on multiple occasions with his hand, and said that he struck Cameron’s head against a wall. Samuel Jones was arrested and is being held at the Hennepin County jail. “My daughter grew up with this man,” said Cameron’s grandmother, Karen Granville, speaking of Samuel Jones. Cameron, she said, “was such a beautiful little boy, so full of life, so full of love and laughter...Ever since he was born, if you brought out a camera, there was a smile.” Jones was sentenced to 15 years in prison for second-degree murder.

2. Vance Johnson, 9 months

Apple Valley

February 12, 2003

The death of a 9-month-old Apple Valley baby was ruled a homicide the same day that his twin brother turned 1. Vance Johnson died February 12, a day after being taken by ambulance from his day care provider’s home in Apple Valley. The provider, Dianne Scribner, 56, told police that she had put the little boy down for a nap in the morning but then found he wasn’t breathing. Vance had no pulse when officers arrived and he died the next morning at a Minneapolis hospital. The autopsy found that Vance died from head trauma consistent with shaken baby syndrome. In July, Scribner was indicted with a count of second-degree murder. Vance’s twin brother, who was at the same home day care, is doing fine, said their father, Matthew Johnson. “Our son will grow up and eventually will learn he had a brother,” said Johnson. But right now, “there is a great big hole in everybody’s heart.”

3. Elijah Guillette, 1

White Bear Lake

April 14, 2003

Paramedics found an unconscious baby when they were called to the White Bear Lake apartment of his mother on April 9. Elijah lapsed into a coma and died in the hospital on April 14. The child’s mother’s boyfriend, Jeremy Jackson, 18, told police several conflicting stories but finally admitted to throwing the boy to the kitchen floor when Elijah vomited on him. Jackson said the baby didn’t cry and that he seemed unharmed. The child sat with him on a couch for several hours before falling asleep, he said. Doctors told authorities that Elijah suffered multiple skull fractures and massive brain swelling that led to his death. In October of 2003, Jeremy Jackson pleaded guilty to unintentional second-degree murder and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

4. Jesse Mendoza, 3 months**Crookston****April 19, 2003**

Jesse Mendoza, 23, of Crookston, was arrested as a suspect in the death of his three-month-old infant son, also named Jesse. The Polk County Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 call from the Mendoza home and found the baby's parents, Jesse and Kelly Mendoza, reporting that their baby had stopped breathing after the father had suctioned material out of the child's mouth. The Ramsey County Medical Examiner found that the baby's injuries were not the result of the short-distance fall that the father had reported and appeared to be the result of violent shaking. The baby was taken to a Fargo hospital and pronounced dead a day later and taken off life support. Jesse Mendoza was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 15 years.

5. Breanna Cantu, 3**Brainerd****April 27, 2003**

Paul Cantu, 34, was charged with criminal vehicular homicide in the car accident death of his daughter, Breanna, 4. About 30 family members and friends gathered in a Crow Wing County courtroom for the arraignment. "I hope he never gets out," said John Vogt, Breanna's grandfather. "He took our angel away." Paul Cantu was arraigned on nine counts in connection with the accident that claimed Breanna's life. He also appeared on a separate complaint, dated March 7, of driving after license cancellation. According to the criminal complaint, Paul Cantu was driving on County Road 24 under the influence of alcohol and at a high rate of speed. He failed to stop at the Highway 18 intersection and collided with an eastbound pickup truck. Breanna Cantu, who was not in a child safety seat, died at the scene of the accident. Paul Cantu and another passenger, Ashley Collison, were also injured in the accident. Cantu's injuries were superficial but Collison was airlifted to a hospital in the Twin Cities where she is in serious condition. Paul Cantu has appeared in court several times in the past, including past charges for gross misdemeanor DUI, domestic abuse, felony felling a peace officer and refusal to submit to alcohol testing. He was also wanted on a warrant from the Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Department for violating his probation on a fifth-degree controlled substance conviction. Paul Cantu pleaded guilty to a charge of criminal vehicular homicide and was sentenced to 6 years.

6. Sincere Understanding Allah, 14 months**St. Paul****July 4, 2003**

Sincere Understanding Allah, 14 months, drowned after his mother, Naomi Gaines, 24, allegedly threw him off the Wabasha Street Bridge during Fourth of July festivities at the Taste of Minnesota. Sincere's twin brother, Supreme Understanding Allah, survived also being thrown into the Mississippi River. Gaines also jumped into the water and was rescued along with Supreme Understanding by onlookers at the festival. Sincere could not be found until boaters spotted his body downriver two days later. Gaines was charged with second-degree murder and attempted murder. Gaines told police in an interview that she wanted to kill herself and didn't want to leave her twin boys behind in a hostile world. Naomi Gaines received psychiatric treatment last August after she was found wandering the streets with her four children "talking and singing nonsensically," according to court records. At a Ramsey County court hearing August 7, 2002, Gaines agreed to voluntarily receive psychiatric treatment and take medication. She was released from those requirements on February 11, 2003. Gaines also has two children ages 7 and 3, who were out of town with relatives at the time of the incident. Supreme Knowledge is now being cared for by his father. Naomi Gaines was committed to the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter for a psychiatric evaluation after a doctor found that she was suffering from psychosis and was unable to care

for herself. She was later sentenced to 19 years for Sincere Understanding's murder and 14 years for the attempted murder of Supreme Knowledge.

7. Raya Donagi, 6 months

St. Paul

August 4, 2003

Mine An Ener, 38, was charged with second-degree murder in the death of her 6-month-old daughter, Raya Donagi. According to the criminal complaint, while visiting her parents in St. Paul, Ener took her baby daughter into the bathroom and slit her throat with a kitchen knife. She emerged from the bathroom and said, "I think I killed the baby," to her mother. The baby had Down syndrome and Ener "stated that the situation was hopeless and she did not want the child to go through life suffering." Raya had been sick since birth and until recently had relied on a feeding tube. Ener was apparently worried that the baby wasn't getting enough nutrition and would have to go back to the feeding tube. The mother and daughter were residents of Philadelphia and were visiting family because Mine Ener was suffering from postpartum depression, had talked of suicide, and had thought of harming her child. The visit home was supposed to allow her to rest and recover from her depression while family took care of Raya. "It's very devastating," said her friend Joe Underhill-Cady. "She's such a wonderful person." On August 30, Ener committed suicide while in the Ramsey County jail.

8. Benjamin Mitchell, 2 months

Minneapolis

August 12, 2003

Tasha Mitchell knew her infant son, Benjamin, was losing a lot of weight. But instead of feeding him, she prayed about his weight and went on a "spiritual fast." She stopped breast-feeding and tried to feed the baby formula and cereal, at times using a medicine dropper, she admitted. Mitchell didn't keep a pediatric appointment and didn't take the baby to a hospital or call a doctor, even after she noticed on August 10 or 11 that Benjamin was cold. Benjamin stopped breathing on August 12 and was pronounced dead at a hospital. At the time of his death, Benjamin weighed less than when he was born. More than two years later, Mitchell pleaded guilty to second-degree murder. She was sentenced to 12 ½ years in prison. Tasha Mitchell offered no explanation in her affidavit as to why she stopped feeding Benjamin. At the time of Benjamin's death, Mitchell was living in a homeless shelter in Minneapolis, but didn't tell shelter staff that the baby was losing weight. One of the other shelter residents said she had seen Mitchell prepare bottles of water but never any type of formula or food for the baby.

9. Kyle Lawver, 3

Minnetonka

November 1, 2003

William Armstrong, 32, was charged with second-degree murder in the death of Kyle Lawver, 3. Armstrong was the boyfriend of Kyle's mother. He was caring for Kyle in his Minnetonka home when the boy received a skull fracture and other injuries. "The medical evidence shows that this child died as a result of a violent, physical act," said Hennepin County Attorney Amy Klobuchar. Police portray Armstrong as con man who duped a former girlfriend into believing they were married; she accused him of assaulting her and their child. He had been arrested for domestic abuse in the past. Authorities say he told Kyle's mother, Amy Lawver, tall tales about being a millionaire and his mother being a surgeon, his father a judge, and his brother a professional football player. According to the charges, Amy Lawver confronted Armstrong in October about his prior arrests. Kyle's grandmother, Nancy Lawver, said, "He was a very much loved child. The only thing that meant anything in [Amy's] life has been taken from her. How do you live with that?" Armstrong was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 35 years in prison.

10. Newborn Girl**St. Paul****October 2, 2003**

An ambulance was called to the home of a 14-year-old girl. Paramedics found her complaining of abdominal pain, determined that the girl was not in need of emergency treatment, and advised her mother to take her to see a doctor. At Regions Hospital, doctors determined that the girl had recently given birth. She then admitted that she had killed her newborn daughter by tying a sock around her neck and then placed the infant in a shoebox. A 22-year-old man who had been living with the teenager's family, Marvin Alvizurez, was arrested and charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct. He has been accused of having a sexual relationship with the girl since she was 12. In December, the girl pleaded guilty in Ramsey County Juvenile Court to second-degree murder. She was ordered to remain in secure custody until her 19th birthday.

11. Newborn Boy**Florence Township****December 7, 2003**

The body of a newborn baby was found on a beach along Lake Pepin by four teenage girls. A preliminary autopsy has not determined the cause of the baby boy's death. Sheriff Dean Albers stated that it was clear that the boy did not die from being hit or strangulation. The infant, one to five days old, was found near a small brush pile on the edge of a wooded area. Albers said that authorities are still trying to find out of the newborn, who was found with part of his umbilical cord still attached, was placed there or washed ashore. The baby was the second infant found dead by Lake Pepin in four years. A DNA test conducted in 2007 concluded that the baby boy was born to the same mother of an unknown newborn girl found in the same area in 1999.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN MURDERED BY AN AQUAINTANCE, STRANGER OR AN UNKNOWN PERPETRATOR:**1. Ben Doran, 15****St. Paul****March 23, 2003**

Ben Doran, 15, was brutally beaten by two gang members who mistook him for a rival gang member. After four days on life support, Ben passed away in the hospital. "He was a special, loving child who had his whole life stolen from him," said Maggie Doran, his mother. Ben was a sophomore at Como High School in St. Paul and enjoyed art and science. Robert Cindrich, 23, and Chawtell Nestell, 23, pleaded guilty to Ben's murder and were both sentenced to 20 years in prison. In 2005, "Benny's Law" was passed in Minnesota, which imposes 10 additional years in prison for gang members convicted of crimes against children.

2. Claudia Schwartz, 50**Minneapolis****April 17, 2003**

Two men arrested for the April 29th murders of Hollis Chromey and her two children in Long Prairie, Jonathan Carpenter and Christopher Earl, were linked to the murders of Claudia Schwartz, 50, of Minneapolis and her father, William Schwartz, 88. There was no apparent link between the two murder cases until a tipster gave Brooklyn Park police information that led to the arrest of the two men at a home in Minneapolis only blocks from the Schwartzes' home. The two cases were tied together because each involved robbery and the crime scenes were similar. Claudia and William Schwartz were found dead in their home on April 17, beaten and with their throats slit. Money and old silver coins had been taken

from the house. "It was a very ugly, brutal killing," said Minneapolis chief of police Robert Olson. Carpenter committed suicide at the St. Cloud State Prison on July 10, 2003.

3. Hollis Chromey, 49

Long Prairie

April 29, 2003

4. Katie Zapzalka, 18

5. Jerrod Zapzalka, 16

Christopher Earl, 20, and Jonathan Carpenter, 21, were charged with second-degree murder in the deaths of Hollis Chromey, 49, and her two children, Katie Zapzalka, 18, and Jerrod Zapzalka, 16. A tipster gave Brooklyn Park police information that led to the arrests of the two men, who were both armed at the time. Chromey and her children were beaten and stabbed during an apparent robbery. All three victims were found bound and gagged with electrical tape and appeared to have struggled to free themselves before they were killed. At least one victim had a slashed throat, said Dave Bjerga, special agent in charge of northern Minnesota for the BCA. Authorities have stated that the two men ended up at the home of Hollis Chromey because they couldn't find another residence they were looking for. Police have also tied the two suspects to the robbery and murders of Claudia and William Schwartz on April 17, 2003 (see above for more information). "This appears to be a random, senseless act of violence," Long Prairie Police Chief Chuck Eldred said. There was no apparent connection between the Long Prairie family and the suspects, or between the Long Prairie family and the Schwartzes. Jonathan Carpenter pleaded guilty to the three Long Prairie murders and was sentenced to three consecutive life sentences. Carpenter committed suicide at the St. Cloud State Prison on July 10, 2003. Earl remains in the Todd County jail.

6. Tanya Cusinato, 33

Minneapolis

May 11, 2003

In August of 2005, Randall Radunz, 43, pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter and acknowledged his culpable negligence resulted in the death of Tanya. After a night of partying, Tanya allegedly became violent after using drugs. Radunz said he bound Cusinato's hands and feet to restrain her. He and two other men then put her in a van and intended to drop Tanya off at a motel. Instead, they dropped her off at Regions Hospital. Authorities first said that Tanya died of drug overdose but the autopsy found she had been strangled to death. During that trip, Radunz said, he put his hand under Cusinato's chin to try to restrain her, but actually caused the injury that led to her death. As part of a plea agreement, another manslaughter charge and a second-degree murder charge against Radunz will be dropped. He faces more than 7 years in prison.

7. Mary Klatt, 53

Blue Earth

May 29, 2003

Police found Mary Klatt, 53, raped and strangled in an empty room at the AmericInn in Blue Earth, where she worked as a hotel clerk. A hotel guest had called 911 at 6 a.m. that morning after finding her body. Roger Morton, 46, was indicted by a Faribault County grand jury of first-degree murder and first-degree sexual assault. He was linked to the killing through DNA and other evidence found at the crime scene. Authorities have stated that robbery was not a motive in the murder. Mary's brother, Arlyn Klatt, said she'd worked at the AmericInn for five or six years. She had been a teacher in Iowa for years and had returned to Blue Earth to care for her ailing mother. After Morton's arrest, Klatt's boyfriend, Danny Larson said he was happy that an arrest had been made but that it "doesn't compensate for my loss." Morton was sentenced to life in prison for Mary's murder.

8. Jennifer Toal, 20

Pillager

May 29, 2003

The bodies of Jennifer Toal, 20, Ryan Englert, 19, and Daniel Harting, 36, were found dead inside a mobile home near Pillager. The two men died from gunshot wounds to the head and Jennifer Toal was beaten to death. She had a 3 year-old son who lived with her parents. A neighbor had called police at 4:48 a.m. to report sounds of gunshots from the property and someone yelling, "Ouch, that hurts," but police left the property when no one answered the door or could be seen through the windows. Benjamin Kennedy, 29, from Brainerd, was charged June 6 with three counts of second-degree murder. He fled from authorities after an arrest warrant was issued. On June 16, Kennedy was found in a motel room in Las Vegas. Before police could apprehend him, he committed suicide by slashing his throat and stabbing himself in the chest. It is not clear whether there are other suspects in the killings still at large.

9. Shirley Shepherd, 79

St. Paul

June 17, 2003

A 20-year-old woman, Tekela Richardson of St. Paul, was charged with unintentional second-degree murder, kidnapping, and auto death in connection with the beating death of 79-year-old Shirley Shepherd of St. Paul. Shepherd's body, tied with yellow rope, was found by three boys on June 19 in a wooded area in Tamarack Nature Preserve in Woodbury. Richardson had previously been arrested on June 7 for stealing Shepherd's SUV. She had claimed that a male friend had stolen it and let her use it. When police found Richardson with Shepherd's car again on June 17 in North St. Paul, she made a similar claim. The criminal complaint against Richardson states that she told another county jail inmate that she, another man, and a teenage girl abducted Shirley Shepherd from her home and that she and the man beat Shepherd and later "emptied" her from the vehicle. Richardson's shoe imprints, found by police in sand on the floor of Shepherd's garage, could be a key piece of evidence against her. Richardson pleaded guilty to intentional second-degree murder in January 2004.

10. Aaron Rollins, 17

Cold Spring

September 24, 2003

Aaron Rollins, 17, died at St. Cloud Hospital only hours after being shot by a classmate at Rocori High School, Jason McLaughlin, 15. Aaron was shot in the neck in the school's locker room as he was getting ready to play badminton. Seth Bartell was later shot in the head in the gymnasium and died on October 10, 2003 after clinging to life in a coma. McLaughlin was finally disarmed in the gymnasium by a Rocori physical education teacher, Mark Johnson, who is being credited as a hero who may have prevented other deaths. Aaron was a senior at Rocori High and was described by family and friends as outgoing, athletic and a lover of the outdoors. Seth was a freshman who was described as quiet but with a passion for skateboarding and snowboarding. Teachers and friends stated that there was no evidence that Aaron or Seth Rollins were more than passing acquaintances with McLaughlin. Neighbors have said that McLaughlin, the son of a Stearns County sheriff's deputy, seemed like a decent kid. Classmates reported that he was very quiet and sometimes was picked on by other students. McLaughlin was found guilty of first-degree and second-degree murder in the deaths of Aaron and Seth. The judge in the case rejected McLaughlin's insanity defense. He was sentenced to 42 years in prison.

11. Marcus Johnson, 5

Duluth

September 24, 2003

An attempted robbery led to the shooting death of a little boy. Several people tried to force their way through the door of the apartment where Marcus Gabriel Johnson, 5, lived with his mother, her boyfriend, and three brothers. The boys were all on the fold-out couch where they slept, near the door. Marcus' mother's boyfriend, Cliff Brown, tried to keep the people out. One of them fired a shot as the door closed.

the boyfriend received another call from Dru's phone but there was no voice on the other end and the line went dead again. An extensive search for Dru was fruitless until five months after the abduction, when her body was found in a ravine outside Crookston, MN, about 25 miles east of Grand Forks. Alfonso Rodriguez Jr., 51, a convicted sex offender from Crookston, was arrested December 1, 2003 and has been charged with kidnapping Sjodin. Rodriguez has pled not guilty. No murder charges have been filed yet in the case, but the discovery of Dru's body in Minnesota raises the possibility of federal murder charges that could carry the death penalty. Rodriguez is a Level 3 sex offender--the classification considered most likely to re-offend, and was released from custody less than 7 months before Sjodin's disappearance. He served 23 years in prison for attempting to abduct a woman from a city sidewalk in Crookston in 1979. He previously had served time for a 1974 sexual assault. Blood matching Sjodin's DNA was found in Rodriguez's car. A knife found in his truck matches a knife sheath found near Dru's car. Rodriguez admitted he had been at the mall at the time of the disappearance but told authorities he had been watching a movie that turned out not to have been playing at the mall's movie theater. Dru's father, Allan Sjodin, said, "It's been five months of insanity for us as a family. Everyone has really suffered with us, and their efforts to continue working with us have been just astounding."

FAMILY MEMBERS/FRIENDS MURDERED:

1. Mark Sullivan, 24

Caledonia

December 8, 2003

Justin Meyer, 23, was charged with two counts of second-degree murder in the death of Mark Sullivan, 24, in Caledonia, Minnesota. Meyer was also been charged with kidnapping a woman and sexually assaulting her. Meyer broke into his former girlfriend's house and shot Sullivan in the head with a shotgun. He then repeatedly threatened to kill the woman and himself. Next, he kidnapped the woman and their one-year-old child and took them to his parents' house in New Albin, IA. While in Iowa, he sexually assaulted the women. The woman was able to call police and Meyer was apprehended. Police in Caledonia later found Mark Sullivan's body in the woman's home.

2. Robert Hannah, 48

Brooklyn Park

December 17, 2003

Robert Kendell, 23, was charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of Robert Hannah, 48, and three counts of attempted murder against a 25-year-old woman and her two children, ages 7 and 3. Police received a phone call that evening from the woman, who screamed she had been shot and screamed again as Kendell, reportedly her boyfriend, shot her children. Law enforcement arrived to the woman's apartment to find Hannah dead in the doorway of his neighboring apartment and the injured woman and children. Hannah was described as an innocent bystander caught in the line of fire. The woman and children were taken to the hospital, where they were reported to be in stable condition. Kendell was released from prison in March after serving 3 years for being a felon caught with a weapon. He has prior felony convictions for sexual misconduct, drug possession, and aggravated assault. Kendell was arrested after a domestic violence call from his girlfriend in the same apartment in June.

In reporting the total number of deaths, it is important to note that at least this many women and children have been murdered. We cannot be certain we have not missed some deaths since we must use a method of data collection that relies upon news accounts. No state or federal agency collects comprehensive data on femicides or domestic homicides. In addition, the murders of women of color, poor women, rural women, lesbians and women and girls used in prostitution may be underreported in our listing as they may be unreported in mainstream newspapers.

The 2003 Femicide Report – Women and Children Murdered is compiled from news accounts. Please contact us if we have missed a death or if you have updated or more complete information on any femicide.

We ask that the MINNESOTA COALITION FOR BATTERED WOMEN be credited when information from this report is used.