



Karen Pilarski/Freeman Staff

Police at Hoover and West avenues in Waukesha search for the carjacking suspects on Wednesday night.

# Vehicle carjacked in Waukesha on Wednesday; suspects reportedly in custody

WAUKESHA — Armed suspects carjacked a vehicle at Shell Gas, 461 W. Sunset Drive, at approximately 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, according to scanner traffic. The car crashed on the corner of Hoover and West avenues and suspects fled on foot to some storage buildings, according to scanner traffic. Police blocked off West Avenue and Sunset Drive while pursuing the suspects.

Three suspects were taken into custody, while one remained at large. A K-9 officer and drone joined the search for that suspect, according to scanner traffic. Officers took the final suspect into custody at approximately 11:30 p.m., according to a report on social media. Attempts to obtain information from the Waukesha Police Department about the incident before press time were not successful.

## WAUKESHA COUNTY



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# Parents testify about injuries kids suffered at parade

## Brooks tries to subpoena the state; is denied

By Brian Huber  
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WAUKESHA — A military veteran who had a child injured in the Waukesha Christmas Parade last November said he's never seen anything like the scene that unfolded as Darrell Brooks Jr. allegedly drove his sport utility vehicle through the parade route.

"Just mass chaos," Matt Harris said. "I am a combat veteran. I've been around mass hysteria most of my career. I've never seen anything like this in such a safe environment where it was just hysteria."

Harris testified during the eighth day of the trial Wednesday. Brooks, 40, is charged with 76 crimes including six counts of homicide by the use of a dangerous weapon, 61 counts of recklessly endangering safety, six counts of hit-and-run causing death, two felony bail jumping charges and one more of misdemeanor battery.

Harris said he was in front of the Steaming Cup with a large group of friends and family when he saw the SUV allegedly driven by Brooks come barreling toward his position before it veered to the left and down Main Street, into the Dancing Grannies group. He said his 7-year-old daughter Brinley had her left foot run over; she suffered four broken toes and two broken bones in her leg. Her shoes had also come off; the one they found the next day had a tread mark on it, he testified.

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Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Stefanie Bonesteel, a witness, testifies Wednesday during the trial of Darrell Brooks in Waukesha County Circuit Court.



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Assistant Waukesha District Attorney Lesli Boese in court Wednesday during the trial of Darrell Brooks.



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Heather Ricciotti looks at Darrell Brooks as he cross-examines her during Brooks' trial Wednesday.



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Adam Bonesteel, a witness who was driving the Citizens Bank float on Nov. 21, 2021, testifies Wednesday.

## 'He knows his fate'

### Former DA Bucher comments about second week in Brooks trial

By Karen Pilarski  
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WAUKESHA — The second week of the trial of Darrell Brooks, the man accused of striking people with a SUV during the Waukesha Christmas parade, has seen a smoother courtroom process and fewer interruptions. Brooks has been dressed in a suit instead of the orange jail clothing.

Brooks earlier withdrew his request for an insanity plea and requested to represent himself in court, which was granted.

Defense attorney and former Waukesha County District Attorney Paul Bucher said he had a few observations about Brooks' representing himself.

"He is smart as a fox and I think you can see he is not an ignorant person. He is an intelligent person. I always said he was but he needed to stop screwing around," Bucher said.

#### Plaintiff: State of Wisconsin

Brooks on a number of occasions was removed from the courtroom after outbursts during the first week of the trial.

"He was having fun at court's expense and the witnesses' expense. I think he was bored. Jury selection and opening statements are boring. Now he has

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# Johnson up six, Evers one in Marquette Law School poll

By Benjamin Yount  
The Center Square contributor

MILWAUKEE — The final snapshot of Wisconsin's races for governor and U.S. Senate reveals the Republicans have momentum heading into next month's election.

The latest Marquette Law School Poll gives Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson a six-point lead over Democrat Mandela Barnes, 52-46, among likely voters.

The poll gives Democratic Gov. Tony Evers a one-point lead over



Republican Tim Michels, 47-46, among the same likely voters.

"The gap has narrowed," MU lead pollster Charles Franklin said Wednesday. "In August Evers was up by four points, then in September by three, and now by one point."

Franklin said there's a similar trend in the race for U.S. Senate.

"We had Barnes by seven the week after the [August] primary," Franklin said. "Then it tightened

to a one-point Johnson advantage in September. And now it's a six-point Johnson advantage in October."

Franklin said the tightening in both races is not because more Republicans or Democrats are making up their minds. It's because of independent voters.

"In August Evers had an 11-point advantage with independents. Then in September that came down to a six-point advantage. And this month it's actually Michels with a one-point advantage among independents,"

Franklin said. "In August Barnes had a 15-point advantage with independents. Then in September it was Johnson by two points with independents. And this month is Johnson by six points among independents."

The Marquette poll shows Evers' job approval rating rising and falling by almost the same amount.

"Forty six percent [of voters] approve of how he's doing his job, 48% disapprove," the poll stated. "In September, it was 44% approve, 47% disapprove."

The poll also noted that Wisconsin voters are becoming more pessimistic about the state.

Pollsters say 63% of voters think Wisconsin is on the wrong track, while just 31% say it is headed in the right direction. In September, that was 53% wrong track, 40% right direction.

The Marquette Law School Poll was conducted Oct. 3-9, 2022, with 801 registered Wisconsin voters interviewed. Margin of error is +/- 4.3%. Pollsters say that includes 652 likely voters and a margin of error for that sample is +/- 4.8% among those voters.

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### Fun Things To Do This Weekend

**Ladies Night Out**, 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. today, downtown Delafield. [delafieldchamber.com/](http://delafieldchamber.com/)

**Village of Brookfield Beer Garden**, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. today, 18725 Hoffman Ave., Brookfield

**"Rock & Roll Royalty,"** 7:30 p.m. today, Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday matinee, Sunset Playhouse, 700 Wall St., Elm Grove. <https://sunsetplayhouse.com>, 262-782-4430

**2022 Jack-o-Lantern Jaunt & Halloween Haunt**, 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Field Park, Highway NN and Highway 83, Mukwonago. Adults \$2, kids \$1, babies free. Mukwonago Rotary fundraising event.

**Lake Country Live Movie Nights Presented by Educators Credit Union**, 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, Wisconsin Brewing Company Park, 1011 Blue Ribbon Circle N, Oconomowoc. Movie is "Ghostbusters." Gates open at 8 p.m. Kids Zone/Basketball open from 8 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. Concessions available. Bring a blanket and sit on the field, sit in the stands or bring your dog and sit in Bret's Backyard (lawn seating).

**Halloween at the Inn**, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dousman Stagecoach Inn Museum, 1075 Pilgrim Parkway, Brookfield. Family fun with games, treats and prizes. Come in costume. <http://www.elmbrookhistoricalsociety.org/>

**Wauk-tober Beer & Wine Walk**, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, downtown Waukesha. <https://www.downtownwaukesha.com/wauk-tober-beer-wine-walk/>

**The Wisconsin Philharmonic: "A Symphonic Halloween"**, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Oconomowoc Arts Center, 641 E. Forest St., Oconomowoc. [www.TheOAC.net](http://www.TheOAC.net), 262-560-3172

**"On the Waterfront" showing**, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday, Majestic Cinema, 770 Springdale Road, Waukesha. Part of Waukesha Reads programming. \$10 per person. Registration due today. Register and pay on <https://waukesha-reads.org/>.

### WEATHER



**Tomorrow:**  
Mostly cloudy  
**High 49**  
**Low 32**

See complete forecast on 8A



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# Evers pardons addiction and recovery nonprofit director for past crimes

## Hopes to inspire others on a similar path

By Karen Pilarski  
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WAUKESHA — Peter Brunzelle, executive director of Project WisHope, has a lot to be thankful for including a growing family, a great career and most of all second chances. Recently Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers called to congratulate Brunzelle on receiving a pardon for past crimes.

Brunzelle was 17 when he committed a string of property crimes, including stealing vehicles and breaking into residences to steal food, clothes, and cash. In total, he was convicted of seven felonies and 16 misdemeanors.

For a person trying to turn their life around, that past can look insurmountable, according to Brunzelle.

“Especially if you have felonies, it looks like you will never get past it. Society is pretty heavily against that,” he said.

He applied for the pardon to set a good example and show people you can get past things. The pardon means no one can hold his past record against him.

Brunzelle said there are a ton of obstacles and hurdles to overcome with a criminal record, such as looking for a job or applying for a license.

“While I can never undo my past, I’m grateful for the opportunity to continue to make amends and a difference in the lives of those who are struggling to find recovery like I once was,” said Brunzelle.

A judge urged him to apply for the pardon several years ago. The judge knew Brunzelle’s story and knew the path he was now on with his work. He wrote a letter supporting Brunzelle and encouraged him to have others write on his behalf.

The pardoning process took several years with interviews before a panel.

“I described what I do and

who I am,” he said.

It took Brunzelle years to gain wisdom and knowledge to get where he is at. Even sober, mistakes are made, he said.

“You live and learn. I’m now at the age and stage of life where I can be that example,” he said.

### Moving forward

Brunzelle launched Project WisHope in 2016.

“I’m in recovery myself and started it as more options for people and connections to care. I was really looking at what people needed,” he said.

Project WisHope is a 501 (C3) nonprofit, peer-run recovery community organization located in the Milwaukee and Waukesha areas and serving the state of Wisconsin. Their mission is to provide resources, education, advocacy, and peer support to Wisconsin’s recovery community members, including those directly impacted by addiction and

mental health conditions and their family members, friends and allies.

When Brunzelle started his recovery in 1994, he was 18. There wasn’t anything in the area at the time to help him. He had trouble finding connections to care and services that addressed substance abuse and mental health.

Now over 28 years sober, Brunzelle works to provide resources, housing, treatment, and hope to those in recovery and their loved ones. WisHope’s services include recovery housing, addiction treatment, peer recovery coaching, resource maps and materials, a 24/7 peer resource and support line, training, speaking, recovery community centers, the Recovery Business Alliance and more.

### There’s No Place Like Home Campaign

Currently, WisHope is fundraising for their “There’s No Place Like Home” Campaign — raising funds to purchase and renovate Recovery Village, a 24-



Courtesy of Project WisHope

Peter Brunzelle, executive director of Project WisHope (pictured), was recently pardoned by Gov. Tony Evers for felonies he committed when he was 17.

apartment unit used as a part of WisHope’s recovery housing program. Since opening in 2016, more than 2,000 individuals have gone through the program.

The Recovery Village Capital Campaign has a goal of raising \$1 million.

The campaign is now live

and gifts are being accepted through the Waukesha County Community Foundation. Information on pledging, naming rights, sponsorship opportunities, campaign events and more can be found at [www.wishope.org/campaign](http://www.wishope.org/campaign).



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Daniel Knapp testifies Wednesday during the trial of Darrell Brooks in Waukesha County Circuit Court.

## Brooks

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### ‘Above the roof’

The first witness of the morning was Stefanie Bonesteel, an employee of Citizens Bank walking in the parade with that group along with Jane Kulick, who lost her life that day. She said two of her daughter’s friends were with the Xtreme Dance Team, and she looked back at them occasionally. She heard a noise she felt was out of the ordinary for a parade, she said, turned to look back and saw headlights of an SUV coming at her, which passed within a few feet of her, she said. She saw the SUV strike a person in front of her, hearing a loud thud and seeing the red poncho that person wore “above the roof of the vehicle at one point for a second.” She said she saw tail lights but not brake lights as the SUV continued around the vehicle her husband was driving for the bank’s parade unit and on down the parade. Neither she nor her children were injured, Bonesteel said.

Her husband, Adam, pulling the Citizens Bank trailer in the parade mere feet ahead of his wife, recalled the incident came upon them as they were near the Nice Ash Cigar Bar. He said he saw the SUV approaching in the driver’s side mirror.

“I heard the roar of an engine and I was watching in my side mirror and saw a woman running kind of towards the corner of my vehicle ... and then saw the impact and heard it as well as the roar of an engine. ... I watched the body fly up onto the hood and her head snapped back and the body remained on the hood as it passed the side of my vehicle to where I thought I could have just reached out and grabbed her,” he said. “The car veered kind of in front of me, I saw brake lights and saw Jane fall off the hood. He proceeded to ... run her over with the right front tire and right rear tire, and at that point I was just focused on the body on the ground and I remember hearing the roar of the engine again. ...

“I thought my wife was the woman on the car so you see your whole life going by you in what you think is an act of terror because you don’t know what’s going on, and then the body is laying on the ground. At that point, that was my only focus, my vehicle I threw it in park and ran to

decipher if this was really who I think it is.”

Before his cross-examination of Mr. Bonesteel, Brooks drew a couple of heavy sighs, and apologized for the delay, saying “I just needed a quick second.” Brooks asked him why he identified the driver as a “he” if never saw the driver; Bonesteel said it was “like the proverbial ‘we.’”

Heather Ricciotti said she was at the Christmas Parade on the corner near the Steaming Cup. As children ran to the street to collect candy thrown, a police officer moved them back. Later, she said, another mother with her “actually said to me, ‘Gosh, they are out there a little far’ and I said, ‘Everything is going so slow. They’re not gonna get hit. They will be fine.’”

But a few minutes later, she said, her son Owen, then 5, was struck by the SUV as it passed them, veering toward the crowd. He needed six stitches to close a wound on his face, she said.

Daniel Knapp testified he also was near the Steaming Cup with Harris, as well as his own wife, three children and other family members. He heard a change in sound, “from laughing and having a joyful time ... to screaming out of fear, terror.” He then saw the SUV swerve toward the area they were before steering back to the middle of Main Street as it struck his daughter Kelsey, sending her flying about 15 feet. He ran toward her and immediately saw a “significant amount of blood on her face. She was conscious, but I would consider a look of — mind you, she’s 3 years old, a look of just complete fear and misunderstanding, not understanding what just occurred.”

He picked her up, ran north on Clinton, stopped to make eye contact with his wife and make sure the rest of the group was safe, and took her to the hospital. There, it was learned the girl suffered a tear on her spleen, a broken nose, significant road rash and cuts to her face, one of which required surgery, he said.

Knapp said before it happened he was able to lock eyes with the driver, noting it to be a black man with his eyes “completely wide open.” On cross-examination, Knapp said he saw a police officer nearby, who “helped save a lot of lives by pushing our children back.”

But Knapp also faced questions from Brooks about why he said he



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Darrell Brooks, who is representing himself, cross-examines Daniel Knapp, a witness, during Brooks’ trial in Waukesha County Circuit Court on Wednesday.

was able to make eye contact with the driver but couldn’t identify whether the driver had long hair or wore anything on his head, and discussions of how one defines degrees of skin complexion, saying he recalled only seeing the driver’s eyes and that he had facial hair before he turned his attention toward his children. Cross-examination was interrupted around lunchtime when severe weather went through the area. It resumed about 75 minutes later, with Judge Jennifer Dorow then ending the court day early so people could go check on their homes. She informed the parties court may run a little later the next couple of days to make up for lost time.

### Subpoenaing the state

Brooks has submitted subpoenas for 12 people, but on Wednesday sought to name the State of Wisconsin as a witness to be called. Last week, Brooks filed a document asking the plaintiff to verify the state will be able to testify at trial and allow him to face his accuser. Dorow has declined to accept the document for trial but instructed Brooks he may raise the matter on appeal if he is convicted.

“You have to simply put on here State of Wisconsin, plaintiff, as an entity; you have to name a person, sir,” Dorow told him after reviewing his subpoena. “You have to have a person named, sir, so that they can come and testify.” “Is it not true under the Sixth Amendment I have a right to face my accuser?” Brooks asked. “My accuser in this matter is the plaintiff, which is the state of Wisconsin.”

District Attorney Susan Oppen argued the subpoena should be rejected because the state of Wisconsin is not a person who can testify in the trial.

Dorow said the subpoena would not be enforced.

“People are called to the witness stand to testify. You have had an opportunity to cross-examine every single person who has been called by the state to testify in this trial. I believe that your Sixth Amendment rights have been complied with.”

Brooks complained again he wasn’t able to face his accuser. Dorow explained the court has jurisdiction in the state, and has



Ebony Cox/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Waukesha Assistant District Attorney Zach Wittchow in Waukesha County Circuit Court on Wednesday during the trial of Darrell Brooks.

been given copies of the criminal complaint and formal charging documents against him and advised of the penalties he faces.

Brooks said he hadn’t even seen the complaint in the matter, and complained again subject matter jurisdiction has not been proven yet. Dorow told Brooks she already declined his motion to dismiss over the argument his objections would be noted.

“I encourage you once again, if you don’t understand anything you can seek the advice of an attorney,” she told him.

When Brooks complained none of the witnesses was making a claim against him and he has been unable to face his accuser, the judge told him, “It is my opinion your belief as it relates to that is mistaken. It’s not a lawful argument. It is frivolous.”

Brooks asked to have the trial stayed to appeal the question. When the request was denied, Brooks said he intended to address it on appeal.

As he has during the trial, Brooks consistently asked people on cross-examination Wednesday if they were aware of or ever had conversations with the plaintiff, prompting immediate objections from the state that the judge has for the most part sustained on relevance grounds. When Brooks persisted in the line of questioning, Dorow has warned him to move on or his cross-examination of witnesses would be cut short. Brooks argued in return that it was a relevant topic, which the jurors need to know.

## Bucher

From Page 1A

something to do, which is focusing on the testimony,” he said.

Bucher added Brooks is asking stupid but intelligent questions. Bucher said Brooks was asking about the plaintiff, the state of Wisconsin.

On Tuesday Brooks cross-examined witnesses, but also asked them if they knew the plaintiff in the case, the state of Wisconsin, or had ever seen it. Judge Jennifer Dorow sustained the repeated objections of prosecutors, telling Brooks to move on to another line of questioning or have his cross examination cut short.

At one point, Brooks responded, “These are relevant questions. The jury deserves to know who the plaintiff is in this matter. ... If they are to make an informed and intelligent decision, they should know who the plaintiff is.”

Bucher said he understood what Brooks was trying to ask.

“All he had to say was ‘Did you have any conversation with the district attorney’ or any of the police officers who were investigating this case. I see his point but he just doesn’t know how to ask. He has a handle on it but doesn’t quite grasp the fitness of it,” Bucher said.

He added he was happy to see Brooks stopped the childish antics and bickering.

### Continued claims

Bucher also touched on Brooks’ claim that he is a sovereign citizen. In a previous hearing, Brooks said “It is me exercising my right to defend myself, to represent myself as a sovereign citizen. So essentially this matter today would be me appearing by special appearance.”

“Sovereign citizen” is a phrase commonly understood to describe people who maintain that courts have no jurisdiction over them or believe they are exempt from the law, but Bucher said Brooks saying this has no legal impact on the case.

Bucher said he dealt with this type of claim when he was district attorney many times. There are people who believe they are sovereign.

“Someone would appear in court as a sovereign citizen and they would file documents that were gibberish. It didn’t go anywhere,” he said.

During the second week, Brooks asked a police officer why he was dressed in his uniform. Again, Bucher understood what Brooks was trying to ask.

“I would ask that too, Maybe not a police officer since that is pretty obvious. I would ask the expert witness if they were retained in this case and who is paying your fee. It is a fair question. He is trying to refute the credibility,” Bucher said.

He is happy to see the trial moving along quicker than last week.

“I feel bad for the witnesses who put up with these shenanigans,” Bucher said.

### Predictions

Despite being more professional, there is nothing Brooks has said to make “any iota” of a difference in the case, according to Bucher.

“There is nothing in this trial that will change the outcome. Unless you believe in divine intervention, which I do, but they don’t respond to subpoenas. Unless there is a mistrial or something. His presumption of innocence, which is under the law, he has really dissolved it himself,” Bucher said.

If there are sparks flying it would be if Brooks testified himself, he said.

“If the government decides to light the fuse and cross-examine him aggressively,” he said.

He was taken aback this week when Brooks apologized for his behavior. Bucher thinks Brooks realized he needed to put his nose to the grindstone.

“I’m sure he wants to get out of it (the charges). He knows his fate. He knows he has six life terms plus hundreds of years. Plus he has Milwaukee County [charges] breathing over his back,” Bucher said.