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Another Wis. officer killed while attempting to make an arrest



Officer Kaitie Leising

A St. Croix County deputy conversed with a suspected drunk driver for several minutes before the suspect abruptly pulled out a gun during the evening of Saturday, May 6, according to the St. Croix County Sheriff.

During a press conference Tuesday, May 9, Sheriff Scott Knudson, said that deputy Kaitie Leising, 29, talked face-to-face with the suspect for eight minutes before she was shot and killed.

The suspect, Jeremiah Daniel Johnson, 34, was later found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation.

On May 6 at approximately 6:15 p.m., Leising was dispatched for a report of a potential drunk driver in a ditch near Glenwood City. A short time later, Leising reported shots fired. She was transported to a local hospital, where she later died.

According to the DCI, Johnson was evasive to Deputy Leising's requests and after approximately 8 minutes of dialogue, Johnson turned toward Deputy Leising, drew a handgun and shot her. After being struck, Deputy Leising discharged her weapon three times, but none of the rounds hit Johnson before he fled to a nearby wooded area. This incident was captured by Leising's body camera, according to the DCI.

The occupants of an assisting vehicle immediately began lifesaving measures on Deputy Leising, who was transported to a local hospital where she died.

Additional officers responded and began searching the wooded area near the scene. Approximately an

hour after Deputy Leising had been shot, a law enforcement officer observed Johnson, heard a gunshot, and witnessed him collapse to the ground.

Knudson refused to say the suspect's name during the press conference.

"For reasons that we'll probably never know, this morally bankrupt and ethically challenged criminal decides to turn and murder Kaitie," said Knudson.

He said that Leising had been with the department for just a year, but had already made a great impact on the community.

"How she did her job was treating people well. Treating people with dignity," said Knudson.

Leising, a former Cumberland resident, is the fourth officer killed in the line of duty in Wisconsin this year. Her death comes less than a month after Cameron police officer Hunter Scheel and Chetek police officer Emily Breidenbach were killed during a traffic stop.

"Our law enforcement community is hurting again in this region," said Knudson. "We've been reeling, but our support from the community has been great. The support from the law enforcement community has been amazing."

Johnson had a criminal record that included careless driving, assault, second-degree assault with a dangerous weapon, operating while intoxicated, failing to stop for a traffic accident with damage to property and violating a domestic abuse order. He was released from prison in 2021 after serving six years in jail for kidnapping and sexually assaulting a woman. Johnson had reportedly found the woman unconscious on a sidewalk after a July 4 fireworks display, put her in his truck and drove to his apartment.

DCI is continuing to review evidence and determine the facts of this incident and will turn over investigative reports to the St. Croix County District Attorney when the investigation concludes.

A memorial fund for Leising has been established at Westconsin Credit Union.

Funeral services are Friday, May 12, at Hudson High School. Public visitation is 9 a.m. to noon, with police honors to follow in the school parking lot.

Leising is survived by her wife. They also have a 3-month-old son.



EV Safety Demo — Barron Electric Cooperative recently partnered with EVsafe.org to provide electric vehicle (EV) safety awareness training to over 50 local first responders. Instructors Mike Klimkosky and Jeff Gross highlighted electric vehicle technology, including responding to EV accidents, and disabling EVs, as well as operating EVs, fire suppression and extrication techniques. Participants also had the opportunity to engage in a hands-on session with various EVs including two models of Tesla, a Ford Lightning truck and a Rivian vehicle. Barron Electric hosted a similar event in 2022 with more than 60 local first responders in attendance. Photo contributed

Divorce case warrant factored in tragedy

By Bob Zientara

The April 8, 2023, incident that ended in the deaths of two Barron County municipal police officers started with an almost mundane, procedural action taken earlier in the year in Barron County Circuit Court.

An arrest warrant had been issued for the man who was stopped by the two officers that day on the outskirts of Cameron. The warrant was related to a contested divorce case in which the man and his wife were involved. But it also involved dependent children — and that's where the county's presence came into the picture, according to John Muench, county corporation counsel.

When warrants are issued

Muench said that people involved in these kinds of cases need to provide the county with notification such as change of address, proof that they're paying child support, and when they get or change jobs.

If the responsible parties don't comply with those conditions, the Sheriff's Department is notified and given documents to serve the individuals.

"If law enforcement can't find the individuals and all of our efforts to locate them have been exhausted, our office can ask for a warrant," Muench said.

"We must show the court that we've done due diligence to locate the individuals."

Once the arrest has been made, the individual is provided with a copy of the materials that law enforcement had been given. If the arrest takes place in a location away from the county, the individual can be interviewed on video and served remotely.

The other method of developing a warrant starts with establishing a case that an individual is in contempt of court, he added.

If contempt is established and the individual is arrested, he/she can be jailed for up to 180 days. The contempt charge can be stayed if the individual fulfills certain requirements such as getting or seeking a job or resuming child support payments.

"When that happens, we ask the court to stay the penalty," Muench said. The subject of the warrant is sent a "pay or stay" document, outlining how the penalty can and/or will be stayed.

How the county gets involved

Among the responsibilities of the corporation counsel's office is to keep track of divorce cases where the

county office of Child Protective Services is already involved.

As to the specifics of the case that led to the April 8 events, Muench said he couldn't discuss them because of "child support confidentiality requirements which limit disclosure only to the administration of the child support program."

The county becomes involved in one of two ways, he said in a recent interview.

"In the first way, some type of public benefit has been paid, such as

Badgercare, or medical assistance for the birth of the child," he said.

"We establish paternity, get a health insurance order from a private party, and arrange for transitional childcare or other kinds of cash benefits."

Using databases from his office and that of Child Protective Services, the corporation counsel's office creates a worklist that includes cases, paternity records, the presence or absence of insurance, and the means to enforce court orders designed to protect the children.

A case usually doesn't close until after the children age out of the system at 18-over, or all due and payable debts are satisfied, Muench added.

"In other cases, both sides may have attorneys, but we're still there," he added.

"Sometimes, the parties involved will tell us they've made a deal and don't want us involved, but we decline if (publicly financed) benefits are still flowing."

If that happens, the county involves itself in child support calculations, such as charging the responsible parent 17 percent of his/her gross income for one child, 25 percent for two children, 29 percent for three children, and so forth.

"If there is a shared placement for the children, you calculate child support based on which parent makes more," Muench said.

"There is no attorney-client relationship with individual parties," he said. "My client is the state of Wisconsin, which is looking out for the best interest of the children."

Editor's note: As of midafternoon Tuesday, May 9, 2023, the Wisconsin Department of Justice had not posted any information about the investigation into the April 8 shootings.

Child Support Services – Duties and responsibilities

- Determines/enforces paternity and child support
 - Refers parents to employment and training
 - Obtains health insurance for children
 - These and other services are estimated to save the state more than \$26.5 million per year.
- Barron County has the following success rates in child support cases
- Paternity – 100 percent
 - Court-ordered child support, 94 percent
 - Collecting child support and/or overdue payments, about 75 percent
 - Barron County has about 2,100 open child support cases.
 - Statewide, there are about 330,000 open cases. Milwaukee County accounts for one-third of the caseload.
 - Completed Department of Justice investigations can be found on the DOJ critical incident website: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/officer-involved-critical-incident>
- Sources: Barron County Child Protective Services, Barron County Corporation Counsel's office, Wisconsin Department of Justice



And the winners were: Mahamed Sharif and Zakiya Barnes were the National Music Week Kids Coloring Contest winners for the National Music Week observance, May 7-14, in Barron.



Battery power—This Rivian vehicle was among several models of battery-powered vehicles that were on the floor during the EV Safety demonstration recently sponsored by Barron Electric Cooperative and the EVsafe.org. Rivian Automotive, Inc., is an American electric vehicle manufacturer and automotive technology company founded in 2009. Rivian is building an electric sport utility vehicle (SUV) and a pickup truck on a "skateboard" platform that can support future vehicles or be adopted by other companies. The company is currently facing financial headwinds which, according to the company, is related to its ability to launch its second platform, the R2.



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