

SEVEN CHILDREN SURVIVE: Investigators work to solve puzzle of deaths in Glen Carbon and Highland

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GLEN CARBON/HIGHLAND – Area law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs and crime scene investigators spent the morning and remainder of the day trying to solve the puzzle of what happened in the death of a man in a fire on Dogwood Lane in Glen Carbon and a woman in Silver Lake in Highland.

At 4 p.m. at the Madison County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff John Lakin, Coroner Steve Nonn, State's Attorney Tom Gibbons and a Highland Chief of EMTs Brian Wilson, gathered with local web, broadcast and print media to provide what information to the public they could. The investigation is still going on and information about the two bodies found has not been released by Coroner Nonn.

Lakin described Thursday, March 16, 2017, as "a tragic day" in Madison County. He said it could have been even worse if the seven children involved had perished in the fire, but all seven are alive.

At 5:15 a.m. on March 16, 2017, the Glen Carbon Police Department received a 911 call, reporting at house fire at 15 Dogwood Lane, Glen Carbon. Glen Carbon Police, Fire and EMS responded and founded the home engulfed in flames. The Glen Carbon Fire Department successfully extinguished the fire and located an unidentified deceased subject inside the residence.

At approximately 5:31 a.m. the Madison County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call, reporting that a vehicle had just driven into Silver Lake, off Route 143, near Prairie Road, Highland, Illinois. Madison County Sheriff's Deputies, Illinois State Police Troopers, Highland Police Officers and Highland Emergency Medical Services (EMS) rushed to the scene.

Highland EMS was first to arrive, finding for the vehicle to be partially submerged in the lake, approximately fifty feet from the shore. Todd Zobrist, a paramedic with Highland EMS, jumped quickly into the lake to search the vehicle for occupants.

He located an unresponsive infant male child in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. The paramedic pulled the lifeless child from the vehicle and immediately began administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), on the roof of the partially submerged vehicle. The infant was revived at the scene by the paramedic and is now being cared for in a St. Louis area hospital. He is stable and expected to make a complete recovery.

An autopsy is scheduled for some time Friday on the person found in the fire, Madison County Sheriff John Lakin said.

Deputies located a purse inside of the submerged vehicle, with identification belonging to a female resident of 15 Dogwood Lane, Glen Carbon, Illinois. Investigators with the Madison County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene and initiated a collaborative investigative effort with the Glen Carbon Police Department.

Sheriff's officials coordinated an air, water, and land search, for any further possible victims at the scene of the submerged vehicle. The Illinois State Police Air Operations Unit, the Highland Police Department, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Underwater Sonar Unit, and the Illinois State Police aided in the search efforts. At approximately 11:15 a.m. members of the search teams located a deceased white female in Silver Lake, approximately 400 feet from the vehicle's point of entry.

The Madison County Coroner's Office, the Illinois State Fire Marshal's Office, and the Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services Unit are aiding in the investigation. An official cause of death is unknown at this point, with additional investigative efforts and autopsies pending.

Cristy Campbell, 32, of Glen Carbon, was earlier identified as a "person of interest, possibly endangered" after missing after the fire. The body of a woman was found matching her description in Silver Lake, but the Madison County Coroner's Office has not positively identified her yet.

A total of seven juvenile children are known to live in the home at 15 Dogwood Lane. All seven children, to include the infant child rescued from the submerged vehicle are accounted for, and safe. The Department of Children and Family Services is involved in the investigation and are ensuring for the care of the children.

“It is my understanding the Glen Carbon Police Department has been to the 15 Dogwood Lane address in the neighborhood 50 times since 2010,” Lakin said. “The calls have been for a wide range of situations from animal barking calls, hang up 911 calls to domestic-related situations at the home. The Glen Carbon Police Department was very aware of that house.”

State’s Attorney Tom Gibbons was asked if he expected charges to be issued in the case against anyone else and he said charges are based on evidence and the investigation had to be completed by law enforcement before that could be considered. Madison County Coroner Steve Nonn said his office would be working on the cause and manner of the deaths and both autopsies of the individuals who died in both tragic situations.

In accordance with normal and routine procedure, establishment of positive identification and proper notification of the next of kin will be made before any release of victim identities, Lakin said.

Lakin credited the many agencies who assisted on both cases, from Madison County Sheriff’s Office members, Illinois State Police, Highland EMS personnel, Glen Carbon Police and Fire Department members, the Illinois Department of Conservation with their rescue boat, Edwardsville Police and Fire Department members, Child and Family Services, the Madison County Coroner’s Office, the State’s Attorney’s office and the State Fire Marshal’s Office, along with others.

The fire is still under investigation with state fire marshal’s office.

More information will be coming Friday with the coroner's autopsy and additional investigation taking place.

