

First-degree murder charges filed regarding vehicular death of young woman early Sunday

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
July 23 2018 3:00 PM



ALTON - Caleb Lenhardt, 21, of Bethalto, faces first-degree murder charges regarding the death of Katie Bunt, 21, of Wood River.

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons has filed charges today against the Bethalto man in connection with a fatal motor vehicle collision in Alton.

Caleb A. Lenhardt (d.o.b. 7/22/1997) has been charged with two counts of First Degree Murder (Class M), one count Failure to Report a Traffic Crash Involving Personal Injury or Death (Class 1), and one count Aggravated Battery (Class 3).

At approximately 3 a.m. on Sunday, July 22, 2018, the Alton Police were called to the 400 block of Belle Street after a vehicle drove into a group of individuals in the parking lot. Katie Bunt, 21 was killed when Lenhardt's vehicle struck and killed her. Additionally, 25-year-old Ashely Allgood was transported to an area hospital for treatment of injuries suffered as a result of this collision; no additional information is available on her condition at this time. According to the investigation, Lenhardt failed to report the crash to authorities, instead fleeing the scene in his vehicle, then on foot. He was later located by an Alton Police K-9 Unit.

"The facts alleged in these charges are the result of an extensive, well-executed investigation by the Alton Police Department and assisting agencies. What they found reveals a brutal intent to cause death and destruction. In a matter of seconds, so many young lives were devastated and damaged forever," said State's Attorney Tom Gibbons.

"Our response to these terrible acts must be strong and decisive – seeking to bring justice for the victims and their loved ones, as well as for our whole community. I ask everyone to support and pray for the victims and their families – especially the family of Katie Bunt - as they seek to recover from this terrible tragedy."

Bond was set at \$1,000,000 by Circuit Judge Richard Tognarelli. The prosecution of this case will be led by Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe, Chief of the Criminal Division, and the State's Attorney's Office Violent Crimes Unit. If convicted, the maximum penalty for First Degree Murder is 20-60 years in prison, of which Lenhardt will be required to serve 100 percent of his sentence. Maximum penalty for a Class 1 felony is 4- 15 years in prison; maximum for the Class 3 felony is 2-5 years in prison.

These charges, as well as the statements made herein, are based upon probable cause. The defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

A video claiming to depict the incident shows a silver sedan backing into a group of people, including Bunt and the person filming. That video has been shared across Facebook and Bunt's family has asked people sharing it to stop, saying it creates more grief for their family to endure.

A witness who called 911 as the incident occurred said the vehicle allegedly driven by Lenhardt ran into a concentrated group of around a dozen young people before jumping several curbs and accelerating toward the now-defunct Elijah P's parking lot.

Previous to the incident, Lenhardt posted two public Facebook statuses seeming to indicate negative intentions. On one post from July 14, 2018, Lenhardt said, "Hurt people hurt people." On Friday, July 21, 2018, two days before the fatal incident, he said, "I turn 21 Sunday who's coming out and doing bad with me?"

Lenhardt also has a criminal history involving two orders of protection filed in 2018 and a charge of violating one of those orders of protection.

A friend of the Bunt family has started a GoFundMe for Bunt's funeral expenses, which can be found here: <https://www.gofundme.com/going-home-for-katie-bunt>

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)