

Madison County State's Attorney's Office Releases Caleb Lenhardt Plea Details

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
January 16 2020 4:50 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Madison County State's Attorney's office revealed plea information in the Caleb A. Lenhardt case that commenced Wednesday afternoon in Madison County Court.

Caleb A. Lenhardt, 22, of Bethalto pleaded guilty today after he drove his car into a group of people killing a 21-year-old woman on July 22, 2018, and injuring another. Jury selection began on January 7. Opening arguments then commenced Wednesday afternoon, January 8.

After five (5) days of testimony and evidence being presented, the jury was released for deliberation around 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 15. At 10:50 a.m. today, the jury submitted a note stating they were hung at a 7-5 vote on whether or not Lenhardt was guilty of First Degree Murder or Reckless Homicide.

First Degree Murder requires that the killing of Katie Bunt was either done with the intent to do great bodily harm or death or that the defendant committed the acts that killed Katie Bunt knowing such acts created a strong probability of death or great bodily harm. Reckless homicide, by contrast, requires a finding that the defendant killed Katie Bunt unintentionally.

"Because of the jury deadlock, and the impending mistrial and retrial of the case, plea negotiations began," Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons said. "While First Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe was confident in the First Degree Murder conviction, our attorneys met with Ms. Bunt's family who expressed they could not withstand another trial. Out of respect and understanding for the family and all of the witnesses who have felt the pain of this trial, our prosecutors consulted with the defense to negotiate a plea for the defendant. Lenhardt pled guilty to Aggravated Driving Under the Influence Causing Death, a Class 2 felony and Aggravated Battery, a Class 3 felony.

"The victim, Katie Bunt, suffered multiple fatal injuries after the defendant reversed his car into a crowd of people, running over Ms. Bunt while accelerating his tires over her body before fleeing the scene. Ms. Bunt later died that evening as a result of the destructive injuries. The second victim, Ashely Allgood, was also struck by the defendant's car. Ms. Allgood suffered multiple injuries, including lifelong nerve injury. Lenhardt pleaded guilty to Aggravated Battery for Ms. Allgood's injuries. Lenhardt had no prior felonies; thus, if the jury would have found him guilty of Reckless Homicide, a sentence of probation would have been presumed under the law.

"By negotiating a plea of Aggravated Driving Under the Influence Causing Death, Lenhardt received a longer sentence than the maximum sentence allowable for a conviction of reckless homicide."

First Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe said that "Every case presents unique challenges.

"This case was no different. It is not in my nature to back down from difficult cases like this. I will continue to try hard cases in order to seek justice for victims of violent crimes. My heart goes out to all of the many victims in this case and their families."

For Aggravated Driving Under the Influence Causing Death, Lenhardt was sentenced to ten (10) years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. He will be required to serve no less than 85 percent of that sentence. For Aggravated Battery, the defendant was sentenced to four (4) years in the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Lenhardt will then be required to serve three (3) years of supervised release (parole). Madison County State's Attorney Gibbons said, "We are glad to see a large number of jurors agreed with our theory of the case, but, the United States Constitution requires a unanimous verdict for a citizen to be found guilty of a crime. Knowing we would have to risk an acquittal or try the case again, we consulted with Katie's family and all agreed it would be best to secure a guilty plea and prison sentence, instead of risking the possibility the defendant would walk without being held accountable."

Gibbons praised First Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe and Assistant State's Attorney Katie Wykoff for their dedication and time spent prosecuting the case. Likewise, Gibbons commended the hard work and dedication of the Alton Police Department, Illinois State Police Crime Scene Division, Illinois State Police Division of Forensic Sciences, doctors and medical staff at Alton Memorial Hospital and St. Anthony's Hospital, and the Madison County Coroner's Office.

"This trial was grueling and distressing for all involved. I want to thank Judge Kyle Napp who conducted a fair and just trial. I would also like to thank the jurors for their attentiveness weighing the evidence and arguments in this case. "