

# **"Looking For Peace From Nightmare:' Authorities Still Seek Answers In Football Star Jaylon McKenzie's Death Months Later**

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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County State's Attorney Thomas Gibbons said recently Jaylon McKenzie's parents should be watching him shine on a football field in the spring. Instead, their hearts are broken yet they remain steadfast in the search to find the individual that took the life of their beloved son."

It has been 16 months, but loved ones, Illinois State Police investigators, and prosecutors are still trying to solve the riddle of how Jaylon McKenie, 14, was killed in the 600 block of 3rd Street in Venice at approximately 11:40 p.m., on Saturday, May 4, 2019.

Investigators with the Illinois State Police (ISP) continue to seek information in the homicide investigation which took the life of a 14-year-old male victim, McKenzie, a rising football star. Although such a young age, McKenzie's talent was featured in the November 2018 issue of Sports Illustrated.

Gibbons pointed out that authorities know there were many witnesses at the party that night of Jaylon's homicide.

"If you have any information, we are asking you to speak up," Gibbons said. "Be a voice for Jaylon. Help us bring Madison County justice for Sukeena, Otis and their family."

On Saturday, May 4, 2019, at approximately 11:30 p.m., officers from the Venice Police Department and ISP District 11 Troopers, responded to a report of shots fired at a large party in the 600 block of 3rd Street. Upon arrival, two subjects were located who had been shot and required medical attention. McKenzie died from his injuries a short time after arriving at the hospital. The other victim, a 15-year-old female, was also shot during the course of the incident and sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

Over one year has passed since Sukeena and Otis Gunner lost their beloved son. Jaylon's parents issued a plea for answers, "Our son, Jaylon, was only 14 years old when his dreams were taken from him, and our nightmare started. Jaylon was a wonderful football player, little brother, and son. Not a day goes by that we do not miss him and his beautiful smile. Everybody that knew him, loved him, and we are all searching for justice. If you know anything about what happened to our son, we are begging you to come forward. We are offering a reward of up to \$5,000 for tips called into Crime Stoppers that can help us find justice for Jaylon. Help us hold whoever did this accountable, help our family find peace from this nightmare."

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons said on the case, "We want to and we will bring justice to this family but we need answers. We need the evidence to charge and convict Jaylon's killer and ensure that that individual no longer walks free."

"This case remains under active investigation by the Venice Police Department and ISP DCI Zone 6. We are seeking the public's help in developing leads to further this investigation so law enforcement and the Madison County State's Attorney can bring those responsible to justice and give much-needed closure to Jaylon's family," stated ISP DCI Master Sergeant Elbert Jennings.

**If you know anything about this homicide case that would help police locate the subject(s) responsible, call Crime Stoppers at 1-866-371-TIPS (8477). All tips into Crime Stoppers are completely anonymous. There is no caller ID, no voicemail, and no way to trace an IP address. All tips must be called or emailed directly into the Crime Stoppers tip hotline only or must be received through the free P3 app to be eligible for the Crime Stoppers \$5,000 reward. Callers may also contact ISP DCI Master Sergeant Elbert Jennings at (618) 571-4124.**

Furthermore, the Jaylon "6" McKenzie-Rising Star Foundation was created to continue the legacy of Jaylon and help other kids in the community excel at life, academics, and sports. For more information or to make a donation, visit <https://www.jaylonmckenziefoundation.com/>.

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