

Stepfather Faces Murder Charges in Four-Year-Old's Death

by K_Guice

A Prineville man is facing murder charges for the death of his four-year-old stepson.

Donnie Earl Asher, CCJ Photo Donnie Earl Asher, 26, pled not guilty during his arraignment on August 4. "He is charged with murder and manslaughter in the first degree," said Andrejs Eglitis, the chief deputy district attorney in Crook County.

Asher was arrested after his wife brought her injured son, Nicholas Ray Jean Muldrow, to Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Prineville.

The child was then transported by ambulance to St. Charles Medical Facility in Bend where he was pronounced dead.

Prineville Police and Crook County Deputies investigating learned that the child was assaulted at the Executive Inn motel on Third Street, where the family had been living, according to a Prineville Police press release.

"All indications are that Nicholas died as a result of injuries he received when assaulted by his stepfather, Donnie Earl Asher, in Prineville on July 31," Police Chief Eric Bush said in a news release.

It is reported that the stepfather had been caring for the boy while his mother was at work. According to the district attorney's office, the mother is not under investigation.

According to Eglitis, the indictment states that Asher showed "extreme indifference to the value of life."

"The state alleges further cruelty to the victim," Eglitis said. According to the indictment, "The state alleges that the defendant knew and had reason to know of the victim's vulnerability which increased the harm caused by the criminal conduct."

Asher initially was arrested on assault charge in the second degree and an unrelated arrest warrant out of Jefferson County for failure to appear in court, according to police.

Asher is being held custody by Crook County at Jefferson County Jail without bail, according to Eglitis.

This case is a reminder of other tragic cases pending in Central Oregon.

Katherine Ann Seifert, the daycare worker is facing murder, manslaughter, assault and criminal mistreatment charges for the death of her 14-month-old niece, Christina Seifert.

August 9, Seifert was scheduled to be arraigned but did not enter a plea. Her case was continued until September 21, according to the Deschutes District Attorney's Office. She remains in custody.

In January, 26-year-old John Michael Nilles of Terrebonne was arrested and charged for murder by abuse in the death of his girlfriend's 16-month-old child.

An autopsy determined that the toddler, Maxwell Moore died of a "closed head wound" after suffering "blunt force trauma" to the head.

According to the Deschutes District Attorney's Office, Nilles is still in custody and his trial is set for January 10, 2007.

In nearby Jefferson County a case is pending in the death of four-month-old Jasmine Adele-Coreas. Her father, Pedro Coreas-Castro of Culver was charged last summer for allegedly shaking his daughter to death.

These are only a handful of cases across Oregon. According to state Department of Human Service figures, 18 children died in Oregon in 2005 as the result of abuse or neglect.

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