

# LOSS STILL STINGS

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# 'He did a very stupid thing'

Mother says 15-year-old boy deserved punishment for throwing brick that killed Peoria woman on I-74

BY ANDY KRAVETZ  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**PEORIA** — While many in Peoria view Rakiem Campbell as a boy out of control and who caused the death of an innocent woman, his mother said after he was sentenced Monday to 22 years in prison that her son didn't mean to harm anyone.

Leah Campbell, Rakiem Campbell's mother, said her son should be pun-

ished for heaving a 15-pound concrete patio block over a eight-foot-high fence atop the Broadway Avenue overpass on July 14. The block plummeted onto a car on Interstate 74, killing 26-year-old Katrina Kelley, who was on her way home.

"He's a child, he did a very stupid thing, and now he's going to have a long time to sit and think about what he did," she said.

Campbell, 15, will likely spend slightly more than the next decade thinking about what he did. The impulse cost him his freedom and Kelley's life.

"He's a very dangerous person in a small package," said Peoria County State's Attorney Kevin Lyons, hours after Campbell's plea hearing. "He's forfeited his right to live free as a teen and as a youthful person for what he did."

Kelley, 26, of 5020 N. Bradford Woods Circle, died just hours after the early morning incident from chest injuries caused by the block striking the car in which she was riding. Kelley had been on her way home when Campbell and

another boy decided to throw the block over the fence.

Campbell pleaded guilty in Peoria County Circuit Court to vehicular endangerment in exchange for a 15-year prison sentence — the maximum under law. As part of the deal, a murder charge was dismissed. Campbell also pleaded guilty to arson for setting a pickup truck afire just a few weeks before the block-throwing incident. He was sentenced to seven years for that crime.

He also pleaded to aggravated battery for attacking a jogger on July 10 in

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# Firefighter allegedly paid pals to set fires

Peoria County police officials became suspicious of man's 'quick response' to scenes

BY LESLIE FARK  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**PEORIA** — A volunteer Limestone Township firefighter has been placed on administrative leave after being charged with arson for allegedly paying two friends to set three fires last month.

Peoria County sheriff's deputies and fire officials grew suspicious of Donald C. Magner, 18, of 3303 W. Fremont St., before his arrest Oct. 9 because of his "quick response" to the fire scenes, reports said.

Also charged with one count of arson are Darrell W. O'Neal, 17, of 3204 W. Fremont St., and Matthew A. Wilson, 19, of 3134 W. Fremont St.

"He had paid less than \$100 to have these three fires set," sheriff's Capt. Dave Briggs said Monday of Magner. "We believe we can show the money exchanged hands and these guys set the fires."

The first fire, at an abandoned home at 3135 W. Fremont, was set about 1 a.m. Sept. 16.

The next morning, at 2:25 a.m., a 1999 Ford pickup truck was found engulfed in flames at 3222 W. Fremont.

Both times, the fires were called in by someone in the O'Neal household, triggering police to take a closer look at the cases, police reports said.

Then on Sept. 23, police arriving to 3222 W. Fremont to investigate a large wood pile ablaze in a field found O'Neal and Wilson already on scene. While

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DONALD MAGNER



DARRELL O'NEAL



MATTHEW WILSON

## PEKIN GROUP AIMS TO SHED LIGHT ON PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



PURCHASE THIS PHOTO AT PJSTAR.COM

ADAM GERIK/JOURNAL STAR

A small group sings "Let There Be Peace on Earth" during a rainy candlelight vigil kicking off Domestic Violence Prevention Month at Mineral Springs Park in Pekin on Monday. The event was co-sponsored by the YWCA of Pekin and The Center for Prevention of Abuse.

# Schools struggle with meaning of law

Administrators say moment of silence rule is still unclear

BY JACQUELINE KOCH  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**PEORIA** — Local school administrators have been anything but quiet when discussing the recent passage of the moment of silence bill.

Some said they received little, if any, information about the bill requiring all public schools in Illinois to observe a moment of silence at the beginning of the day. Others said they understand the intent of the bill but don't think it will be met.

Senate Bill 1463 went into effect Thursday after the Illinois House of Representatives overrode a veto by Gov.

Rod Blagojevich. By Monday, many area schools were inserting 10- to 15-second moments of silence into their daily routines.

Students and teachers at Washington Community High School observed a moment of silence about 10 a.m. before mid-morning announcements. Superintendent James Dunnan said he read students and teachers the legislation because he wanted them to understand its intent.

"I don't think it will be too cumbersome for us," he said. "It just kind of

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DAVID ZALAZNIK/JOURNAL STAR

Metamora Township High School juniors, from right, Danielle Warner, Paige Waggoner and Emily Volz stand for a moment of silence.

# Lewistown parents file lawsuit over ball fields

Attorneys say district treating teams differently

BY BRENDA ROTHERT  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**LEWISTOWN** — The parents of two Lewistown sophomores recently filed a lawsuit against the school district because they want to level the playing field — literally — for athletes of both sexes.

The parents and their attorneys say the district is violating federal law by giving the boys' baseball team a nicer ball dia-

mond than the field given to the girls softball team.

The suit, filed Oct. 3, only identifies plaintiffs by their initials, because listing their names would identify their daughters, who are minors.

Attorney Samuel Schiller of Cookeville, Tenn., said in a news release Monday that he represents the plaintiffs in the suit. Professor Ray Yasser, who teaches sports law at the University of Tulsa College of Law, also is representing the

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