

Ehlert murder case goes to jury

By DAN ROZEK
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Prosecutors Wednesday described murder suspect Elizabeth Ehlert as a cold-blooded killer who methodically plotted the death of her unborn child.

But defense attorneys portrayed the Palatine woman as a confused hypochondriac who lied to family and friends about her medical condition yet did not commit murder.

Those differing characterizations of Ehlert, 33, came during closing arguments in her five-week-old murder trial in Rolling Meadows.

Following the daylong arguments, a Cook County jury deliberated for four hours Wednesday evening but failed to reach a verdict. Jurors will resume their deliberations today.

Ehlert is charged with first-degree

murder for allegedly dumping her newborn infant in Salt Creek moments after giving birth to the baby in her Palatine home Aug. 21, 1990.

The body of a newborn girl was found two days later in a downstream flood control pond fed by the Salt Creek.

Ehlert, who faces a possible death sentence if convicted, has denied giving birth to a live child. But friends and police have testified that she said she miscarried a stillborn fetus in late August 1990.

Prosecutors in their arguments painted Ehlert as a woman who decided early on to kill her infant and thus took elaborate pains to conceal the pregnancy.

"What she did, she had been planning for a long time," Cook County Assistant State's James Andreou

told jurors. "She intended to kill this child. This child was doomed from the very beginning."

Andreou and co-counsel Lawrence Spector reminded jurors of the string of purported medical problems she offered friends and family in 1990 to explain her weight gain, including abdominal tumors, cancer and, eventually, a failed pregnancy.

But Ehlert's attorneys contended those erroneous claims by Ehlert are not enough to convict her of murder.

"She's not charged with lying to her boyfriend, or lying to police or

living some fantasy life," Cook County Assistant Public Defender Allan Sincx said. "She charged with killing a baby. That's what the state has to prove."

Sincx, who called the case against Ehlert "a collection of mistakes, errors and lies," argued repeatedly that prosecutors had failed to prove the baby was Ehlert's. Sincx hammered at the circumstantial evidence and the DNA genetic testing that authorities say links Ehlert to the dead baby found in Lake Irene.

Calling the genetic testing "just worthless," Sincx said "there is no proof this particular baby was hers."

Prosecutors also failed to offer a motive for the killing, could not even prove the child was born alive and failed to show that it drowned.



Elizabeth Ehlert

ILLINOIS BRIEFS

2 men sentenced in gun-selling scheme

CHICAGO — A Fox Lake gun dealer and his son have been sentenced to prison terms for selling high-powered weapons that both men believed were intended for a street gang. Calling the scheme "one of the most serious offenses that I've seen," U.S. District Court Judge Suzanne B. Conlon sentenced Richard Tytkowski, 65, of Fox Lake to six-and-a-half years in prison and his son, Timothy, 29, to eight years.

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THE PALATINE TRAGEDY

Police urge neighbors to protect each other

By TODD NATENBERG
Daily Herald Staff Writer

The Palatine police officer's message was simple in deterring crime: know thy neighbor and don't forget the basics when it comes to home security.

In the wake of the murders at Brown's Chicken and Pasta restaurant, some 20 residents met at the village community center Wednesday with police and a village trustee to discuss and learn ways they can better protect themselves.

They spoke of neighborhood watch groups, locking doors and always dialing 9-1-1 if anything looks suspicious.

Margot Sims, 61, who has lived in Palatine since 1974, compared the neighborhood watch program to an "insurance policy" on her home.

"This is insurance, too," said Sims, whose Heatherlea subdivision currently does not have neighborhood watch. "We are insuring ourselves and our neighbors. I think we should go for it."

While village Trustee Dan A. Varoney called the special meeting of his advisory council in large part to encourage the creation of the watch program, officer Brad Grossman,

crime prevention officer, also told the audience what they can do to help themselves, without an organized system.

He said the key to preventing burglary is deterrence. Using examples of interviews with arrested burglars who have told police what it is they look for when deciding which house or area to rob, Gross relayed stories of barking dogs, sounds by the owners, and simply lights being on as keys to warding off potential robbers.

"They don't want noise. They don't want attention drawn to them," Grossman said. "Please make it the most undesirable place to rob."

Grossman said that in 60 percent of all burglaries in Palatine, the robber enters the home via an open door or an open window.

"It was very interesting," said Varoney, who called the meeting to help encourage his "Operation Fresh Start" program, which is designed to convince residents to "empower" themselves by taking additional safety precautions.

But some of the residents said they have been trying unsuccessfully for some time to get their neighbors involved.

Phelan leads amendment call to ban unfunded mandates

By LAURA JANOTA
Daily Herald Staff Writer

The push was on Wednesday by local leaders for a constitutional amendment that would stop the state legislature from passing on mandates without giving local governments the money to implement them.

Cook County Board President Richard Phelan, who has led the rallying cry against unfunded mandates, called for the General Assembly to approve the amendment so Illinois voters can consider it next year.

Phelan, who is considering a run for governor and made the same pitch Tuesday downstate, was joined by about 30 suburban leaders at a press conference in Hillside.

"The state, which cannot balance its own budget, certainly... has a lot of nerve to tell municipalities how to spend their money," declared Buffalo Grove Village President Sidney Mathias, who was at the gathering.

Mathias, along with other local

leaders, believes unfunded mandates translate into higher property taxes.

Mathias said state laws requiring particular pensions, recycling and other mandated programs cost local governments' money. But at the same time, the General Assembly's interest in property tax caps for local governments takes their spending power away, he said.

Leaders in both the House and Senate said Wednesday that the constitutional amendment has a good chance of passing this session.

But a spokesman for Gov. Edgar questioned whether an amendment is really a burning issue right now since Edgar has been vetoing all unfunded mandate bills that reach his desk.

"It's not necessary if you have a governor like Edgar, who's vetoed every mandate that comes to his desk," said Edgar Spokesman Gary Mack.

Edgar wants to review the amendment, however, to see if it would work, Mack said.

MacArthur, longtime civic leader, dies at 70

By AMY McLAUGHLIN
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Barrington area officials are mourning the loss of one of their own, Alexander MacArthur, who died Monday at his Barrington Hills home after a bout with cancer.

A longtime Barrington Hills vil-

lage trustee, MacArthur, 70, cited "medical problems" in his decision to step down from the post in October.

"We'll miss him," said Barrington Hills Village President James A. Kempe, a colleague of MacArthur's since both became village trustees in 1973.

Hispanic parents complain about Dist. 46 bus drivers

By SHERI VAZZANO
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Nearly 30 Hispanic parents in Elgin Area Unit District 46 are accusing some school bus drivers of treating their bilingual children with disrespect by using abusive language to them, picking them up late and showing a general lack of concern.

District officials, who said they first were made aware of the issue earlier this week at a school board meeting, said they will schedule a meeting soon with parents to address their concerns.

Parents of some Hispanic children attending Streamwood Elementary School, which houses the district's early childhood, kindergarten and first-grade bilingual program, said something has to be done to change the way their children are treated on the school buses.

"The attitude of the bus drivers is different toward Hispanic students than toward English-speaking students because the drivers think we won't say anything because we are afraid. But we are not," parent Teresa Perez said.

Perez, who was joined by nearly 30 other Hispanic parents at this week's board meeting, told officials: "our children are being verbally abused by the drivers; they are being rushed to get off. Some students are

afraid."

She said one parent told her that his daughter became frightened as she was being hurried by a driver to step off the bus. The girl fell, bruising her legs.

Because students fail to understand the drivers' English-spoken announcements, some students have missed their stops, causing panic among parents, Perez said.

Another complaint among parents is the drivers' lack of promptness, she said.

"They arrive late many times, sometimes a half-hour," she said. "This causes us to be late to our jobs or leave the kids on the street unattended. This shows they don't care. We are asking for respect for the Hispanic community."

Andrew Martin, director of the district's department of transportation, said the language barrier between the drivers and the bilingual students probably is causing much of the problems parents have noted.

"The driver may yell three or four times to the children to sit down in their seats, but because they don't speak English, the students may not have understood the driver even the first time," he said.

Martin said administrators will consider providing a bilingual aide for each bus.

Arlington school bus rear-ends car; 3 injured

By KRISTY BARD
and ANNE SCHMITT
Daily Herald Staff Writers

Two junior high school students and a 71-year-old Arlington Heights woman suffered minor injuries when a school bus rear-ended a car Wednesday afternoon in Arlington Heights.

About 40 students from the nearby Twin Groves Junior High School were on board the bus when the acci-

dent occurred at about 3 p.m. on Arlington Heights Road, just south of Hintz Road.

Police said the bus was heading north in the right lane behind a 1986 Ford Taurus being driven by Arlington Heights resident Leona R. Severson when traffic slowed in front of them. Distracted by "unruly" students in the bus, the 23-year-old bus driver crashed into the back of the Taurus at about 35 mph, police said.

HAVEN: 1,300 acres in Hoffman Estates

Continued from Page 1

place attractions.

"As we move into the 21st Century, people are realizing how important the wetlands are to our ecological balance," Phelan said. "This is going to be another large increment (of forest preserve dollars) set aside so people here in the county can learn how important these ecological areas are."

The first phase of the project, which would include construction of the lake and surrounding parking, would cost about \$1.7 million. No starting date for the project has been set.

The forest preserve already has set aside \$750,000 for the development and an additional \$200,000 for the completion of an engineering and feasibility study. In addition, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced Wednesday that it would donate \$100,000 to the project if area business leaders can come up with a matching \$500,000 contribution.

If the community can work together to finance the project, the development will be an educational, wildlife wonderland for future generations to enjoy, said Benjamin Tuggle, Chicago field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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