

Accused murderer sought new public defenders

◆ **Paul McDonald: While in Rockingham County jail, Danville man requested help from the court in getting new attorneys.**

By TRENT SPINER
Union Leader Correspondent

BRENTWOOD — A Danville man who allegedly chopped his landlord to death with an ax-like weapon has been writing from jail asking for new public defenders before trial, court records show.

Paul G. McDonald, 50, is accused by police of killing Richard Wilcox of 164 Kingston Road last year on June 11 or 12. McDonald, who was renting a room, told police he fell asleep in a chair but woke up to find Wilcox allegedly trying to perform a sexual act on him.

Police affidavits say McDonald became enraged, beating Wilcox at multiple locations throughout the house.

After Wilcox was debilitated, McDonald stashed his body in a corner of the basement, assumed his identity and fled the state, police said.

After being arrested about a week later in Vermont, McDonald was charged with al-

ternative counts of first- and second-degree murder.

Since being jailed, McDonald started writing letters in January, asking for access to a law library inside the Rockingham County House of Corrections, where he is being housed before trial.

He was interested in researching his own defense, but was told by jail administrators that he would need permission from a judge.

Superior Court Justice Tina L. Nadeau denied his request because he already had attorneys assigned to the case, court records show.

In a separate letter dated Feb. 17, McDonald said he was having problems getting in touch with his public defender, Julie Nye. He complained that a phone system in place at the jail was blocking his outbound calls.

"This poses serious problems for me to request information, ask questions and to constructively participate in the defense process," he wrote. "That has a direct impact on my life and freedom. Any help that the court could provide would greatly be appreciated."

It appears his unhappiness continued to grow.

In letters sent to a judge and dated March 18 and April 23, he asked for both of his public defenders to be removed from the case.

McDonald said he believed counselors were not adequately representing him and there was a lack of trust when it came to planning a defense strategy. He also cited a lack of communication.

But just a week after his final letter, attorney Nye entered a tersely worded statement into the record saying her client wanted to withdraw his request.

The court record stops after that — there are no more letters from McDonald and no explanation as to what happened.

Nye has not returned messages seeking comment on the case. McDonald could not be reached in jail and prosecutors N. William Decker and Francesca Stahle, from the state Attorney General's Office, took no written stance on any of the letters.

A 21-day trial is set for January. Court filings show McDonald is unlikely to take a plea offer currently on the table, which would land him in prison for life without the possibility of parole.



Geoff Wilson of the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest leads a group of Pakistani educators through the woods and water in Woodstock yesterday as part of a summer-long program for the educators' at Plymouth State University.

Pakistani educators study NH's mountain streams

◆ **At Hubbard Brook forest: Plymouth State University hosts secondary school teachers from southern Asian country.**

“Professional development is a huge challenge. We want to deliver on quality education.”

By BEENA RAZA
Pakistani Educational Leadership Institute

By PAULA TRACY
New Hampshire Union Leader

WOODSTOCK — A group of Pakistani education leaders trooped through the woods at Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest yesterday, looking at mountain streams as part of a summer-long experience.

When they go back to their home country, the educators will be able to help teachers teach science with a western twist.

"We are looking at a collaborative model in professional outreach and development" between the United States and Pakistan, said Beena Raza, coordinator for the Pakistani Educational Leadership Institute.

Since 2004, Plymouth State University has hosted the in-service training for secondary school teachers from Pakistan. This year, PSU graduate students who are also teachers in New Hampshire have joined the PELI classes and are learning a bit of what it is like to teach there.

Yesterday, the educators went to Hubbard Brook, which is operated by the federal government. It has the oldest and longest record of stream water analysis anywhere in the world.

There are more than 7,000 acres of experimental forest here and officials use the headwaters of the Hubbard Brook, which leads into the Pemigewasset River, to study human impacts on water and the environment.

At Hubbard Brook, Geoff Wilson gave the educators an overview of the work at the experimental forest and how it might be useful in helping teachers integrate water study into curriculum.

The forest is analyzed for how chemicals flow through and what human impacts can be detected both in the water and on the land.

Raza noted that the Pakistani landscape in the north is not unlike New Hampshire's deciduous forest and that many of the teachers will be able to go home and help other teachers develop hands-on training for students.

She said there have already been 120 teachers through the month-long program at PSU who have had contact with about 130,000 Pakistani teachers.

"Professional development is a huge challenge" in Pakistan, Raza said. "We want to deliver on quality education." The U.S. Department of State and PSU help fund PELI in an

effort to share best practices between the two countries.

She said in Pakistan there is a movement towards teaching both science and math in English because there is less of a language interpretation problem through translations.

The educators also went yesterday to Franconia Notch, where they visited the source of the Pemigewasset River. They also visited the Basin and learned how water formed the granite pools there.

The group plans to travel to Washington, D.C., and will participate in other teaching collaborative opportunities with the focus on how science curriculum is developed and delivered in the United States.

Academy to open in Claremont

◆ **Private education: While school will teach in Catholic tradition, don't have to be Catholic to attend.**

By KRISTEN SENZ
Union Leader Correspondent



CLAREMONT — A new private school serving preschool through high school students is opening this fall at the former St. Mary School in Claremont.

New England Classical Academy, which operated last year from a summer home in Stoddard, has enrolled 61 students and, while not specifically endorsed by the Manchester Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, plans to offer a parochial education in the Catholic tradition for tuition students from across western New Hampshire.

"We're not seeking Diocesan approval at this time," said Damien Fisher, executive director of NECA. "We have a lot of the St. Mary's families, but this is a totally separate entity."

The private school is renting the three-story St. Mary School building in downtown Claremont from the Diocese and is seeking donations to help it reach full capacity.

"You can't drop your kid off at school and then just pick them up," Fisher said. "It's not going to work like that. We need parents to be part of the community we're trying to build here."

Many of the students are from the Claremont and Keene areas, but Fisher said he and other school organizers are hoping to enroll more students from Hanover and Lebanon.

The school has hired eight teachers, including Academic Dean Andrew Campbell and theater director Heidi Fagan, who has worked at Northern State in White River Junction, Vt.

Fisher, a former reporter at the now-defunct Eagle Times newspaper based in Claremont,

Damien Fisher is the executive director of the New England Classical Academy, a private school offering education in the Catholic tradition that is opening in Claremont next month.

said although the school will educate students in the Catholic tradition, not all teachers at NECA are Catholic, and students don't have to be Catholic to attend.

"We're just trying to go back about 1,000 years to the way education used to be," he said. "And we're not being traditional for the sake of being traditional. We're just trying to find what works."

In addition to handling the day-to-day operations at the school, Fisher will oversee disciplinary issues and teach classes in Greek and Humanities.

"We want to offer a unique and rigorous education that you can't find anywhere else," he said.

Tuition for elementary school students is \$4,200 per year. Students in high school are asked to pay \$5,400 per year. But, Fisher said, the tuition rates are less than what it costs NECA to run the school, so organizers are looking for parents and community members to help out in whatever way they can, from fundraising to janitorial work.

"So far," he said, "we've gotten a fantastic response."

New England Classical Academy got its start in Stoddard last year when Nicholas

Healy Jr., the president of Ave Maria University in Florida, led the organization use his summer house to hold classes for four high school students. But school leaders soon realized they needed a larger, more public space to recruit and educate students.

Fisher, who was teaching at NECA at the time, contacted Father Shawn Therrien at St. Mary's Parish in Claremont shortly after St. Mary School closed down earlier this year. He inquired about using the school's third floor, but NECA ended up renting the entire building from the Diocese of Manchester.

"They've been very gracious to us," he said of the diocese.

The school, which is still seeking donations to help fund its operations, plans to open in Claremont on Aug. 27.

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