

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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(January 25, 2007, Akron) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Willard McCarley, 43, of Northfield, was found guilty by a jury today of Aggravated Murder, a Felony of the First Degree. He will be sentenced tomorrow morning by Judge Shapiro at 9:00 a.m., and could receive a maximum sentence of Life in prison.

The Defendant murdered Charlene Puffenbarger on January 20, 1992 in her Twinsburg home. On February 4, 2005, a jury convicted McCarley on one count of Aggravated Murder, and he was sentenced to life in prison. In March 2006, the 9th District Court of Appeals reversed the sentence, finding a comment the Judge made to be "prejudicial." McCarley was then granted a new trial.

McCarley beat, strangled and suffocated Ms. Puffenbarger (26), after vowing to kill her after she filed a complaint seeking child support for one son whom McCarley fathered. He was already paying child support to another woman who had also been a girlfriend and bore his child. Puffenbarger had two toddler sons at the time of her murder, one of whom testified during the 2004 trial when he was 16-years-old. Both boys were in the apartment and witnessed the murder. In fact, key testimony from the older boy was that "the policeman did it." Later officers found a Sheriff Deputy jacket in the Defendant's apartment.

The case was stalled until 2002, when investigators reopened it because of advances in DNA technology. Officers linked McCarley to the murder through DNA found on the leather strap used to choke the Victim. In addition, the Victim's older son identified McCarley as the murderer.

In May, 2004, McCarley was arrested in Scottsdale, Arizona while vacationing at a resort.