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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIVE DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH DRUG DELIVERY RESULTING IN DEATH, ANOTHER WITH INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER FOLLOWING FOUR OVERDOSE DEATHS IN MONTCO



BRENDA MCLAUGHLIN

[Brenda-McLaughlin-criminal-complaint](#)



ANTONIO RIVERA

[Antonio-Rivera-criminal-complaint](#)



MAURICE JOHNSON

[Maurice-Johnson-criminal-complaint](#)



MARQUESE GAINES



MARK HERTZOG



KURT EPSENSHIP

[Gaines-Hertzog-Epsenship-criminal-complaint](#)

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (March 28, 2019) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele, Abington Township Police Chief Patrick Molloy, Lower Merion Superintendent Michael McGrath, Upper Merion Township Police Chief Thomas Nolan, Lower Providence Township Police Chief Stanley Turtle and Whitpain Township Police Chief Kenneth Lawson announced today the arrests of five defendants on the charge of Drug Delivery Resulting in Death and one defendant on charges of involuntary manslaughter related to four overdose deaths that occurred from August 2018 to January 2019 in Montgomery County.

Charged with Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (DDRD), Possession with Intent to Deliver and related charges are:

- Maurice C. Johnson, 26, of 7337 Frontenac Street in Philadelphia;
- Brenda McLaughlin, 37, of 2673 Woodstream Drive in Hatfield;
- Antonio Rivera, 33, 822 W. Venango Street in Philadelphia;
- Mark R. Hertzog, 44, of 513 Hamilton Street in Norristown;
- Marquese H. Gaines, 27, of 4235 N. Darien Street in Philadelphia.

Also charged with Possession with Intent to Deliver, Involuntary Manslaughter and related charges was Kurt W. Espenship, 52, of 732 Hidden Valley Road in King of Prussia.

Five of these six defendants have been arrested and arraigned. The sixth—Marquese Gaines—has fled. A warrant has been issued for his arrest and law enforcement is asking for the public’s help in locating Gaines. Anyone with any information as to his whereabouts is asked to call the Montgomery County Detective Bureau at 610-278-3368 or the Upper Merion Police Department at 610-265-3232.

The arrests of these six individuals came as a result of multi-agency investigations involving:

- Montgomery County Detective Bureau’s Narcotics Enforcement Team (NET)
- Liberty Mid-Atlantic HIDTA
- Abington Township Police Department
- East Greenville Police Department
- Lower Merion Township Police Department
- Lower Providence Township Police Department
- Upper Merion Township Police Department
- Whitpain Township Police Department
- Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Drug Law Enforcement Division.

DA Steele has made fighting the opioid epidemic one of his office’s main priorities, which includes investigating and prosecuting anyone who distributes, traffics or sells drugs illegally. This includes an intense focus on those drug dealers who sell the heroin, fentanyl and other poisons that kill someone else leading to the Drug Delivery Resulting in Death charge.

“In the last two years, our team of detectives and local law enforcement have investigated all of our overdose deaths as potential homicides to see if they can

determine who is responsible for causing the overdose death,” said Steele. “These five arrests for Drug Delivery Resulting in Death brings to 17 the number of times we have charged drug dealers with homicide in the last three years. We are sending a loud and clear message to those who traffic in this poison that if we can prove that the drugs you sold caused someone’s death, you will be charged with homicide.”

Liberty Mid-Atlantic HIDTA has partnered with the District Attorney’s Office in many of the drug-related investigations of drug traffickers, dealers and dirty doctors. “These charges recognize that every life in Pennsylvania matters, including those of persons with substance use disorder,” said Executive Director Jeremiah Daley. “We are proud to partner with and support the Montgomery County DA and his Drug Task Force and hold accountable those who put lives at risk for their own enrichment. For those who struggle with addiction, we encourage you to seek treatment so as not to become a victim. For those who purvey drugs like heroin, fentanyl and other opioids, we demand you stop, and avoid joining these defendants facing homicide charges.”

A synopsis of each case follows:

DECEASED: Jared Dameron, age 39, died on Aug. 7, 2018 in East Greenville
DEFENDANT: BRENDA MCLAUGHLIN (DOB: 4/28/81): 2673 Woodstream Drive, Hatfield, PA

CHARGES: Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (F1), Criminal Use of Communications Facility (F3), Possession with Intent to Deliver (F), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2), Possession of a Controlled Substance (M) and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (M).

ARRAIGNED: March 27, 2019, arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Maureen Coggins, who set bail at \$1 million. She was remanded to the Montgomery County Correction Facility.

PRELIMINARY HEARING: 11 a.m., April 8, 2019, MDJ Coggins.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION: On Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2018, Jared Dameron was found dead on his bed in his bedroom by his mother. A search of the bedroom by East Greenville Police found a white powder residue on top of a desk that was adjacent to the bed. The investigation revealed through multiple text messages that the defendant had arranged to buy heroin/fentanyl from the defendant in Quakertown on Aug. 3, 2019. Detectives conducted an undercover buy from McLaughlin on Aug. 16, 2018. She was arrested and initially charged her with Possession with Intent to Deliver and related charges. The final autopsy report on Jared Dameron determined the cause of death was acute intoxication by fentanyl, acetyl fentanyl and heroin.

DECEASED: Danielle Petersen, age 29, died on Sept. 25, 2018 in Abington Township

DECEASED: Inmate Ronald Brauning, age 41, died on Oct. 9, 2018 at Montgomery County Correctional Facility

DEFENDANT: ANTONIO RIVERA (DOB: 3/4/86): 822 W. Venango Street, Philadelphia

CHARGES: Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (F1), Controlled Substance to Confined Person Prohibited (F2), Criminal Use of Communications Facility (F3), Possession with

Intent to Deliver (F), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2), Possession of a Controlled Substance (M) and Possession of Marijuana (M).

ARRAIGNED: March 6, 2019, arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen John D. Kessler, who set bail at \$250,000. He was remanded to the Montgomery County Correction Facility.

PRELIMINARY HEARING: noon, April 3, 2019, MDJ Kessler.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION: On Tuesday, Sept. 25, 2018, Abington Township Police were dispatched to a home for an unresponsive female. They arrived to find Danielle Petersen deceased, sitting upright on a sofa in the living room. Two wax style packets containing suspected heroin/fentanyl and drug paraphernalia were found at the scene. Detectives determined that the deceased was communicating with "Tony" to purchase a sample of the heroin/fentanyl and if she liked it, she would buy a bundle (12 to 14 bags of heroin/fentanyl) the following day. Using the deceased's phone, detectives set up a controlled buy on Oct. 5, 2018, then intercepted the vehicle at the meet location, which was the deceased's residence. Rivera was arrested and arraigned on charges of Possession with Intent to Deliver and related charges. Rivera's bail was set at \$1 million, and he was remanded to MCCF and arrived on Saturday, Oct. 6, 2018.

On Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2018, inmate Ronald Brauning was found unresponsive in his cell at 12:45 p.m. In Brauning's cell, Montgomery County Detectives found rolled up cellophane with a white substance and a plastic sandwich bag that contained a white substance. Testing later determined it was fentanyl. A Grand Jury investigation was launched and revealed that Brauning had purchased what was purported to be heroin/fentanyl from Rivera multiple times since Rivera's arrival at MCCF.

The autopsy of Danielle Peterson determined that the cause of death was fentanyl intoxication. The autopsy of Ronald Brauning determined that the cause of death was combined drug intoxication of fentanyl, nortriptyline, mirtazapine and fluoxetine.

DECEASED: Kathleen (Kat) Sicoli, age 55, died on Jan. 10, 2019 in Lower Providence Township

DEFENDANT: MAURICE JOHNSON (DOB: 10/18/92): 7337 Frontenac Street, Philadelphia

CHARGES: Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (F1), Criminal Use of Communications Facility (F3), Possession with Intent to Deliver (F), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2) and Possession of a Controlled Substance (M).

ARRAIGNED: March 26, 2019, arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Kelly Rebar, who set bail at \$500,000. He was remanded to the Montgomery County Correction Facility.

PRELIMINARY HEARING: 10 a.m., April 23, 2019, MDJ Rebar.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION: On Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019, Lower Providence Township Police received a call for a wellness check. Officers entered Ms. Scioli's residence and found her deceased. Detectives found two blue wax paper baggies on a tray table in front of her body as well as an orange syringe. The ensuing investigation included a search of the deceased's cell phone. Detectives found 207 text messages since November 2018 to the cell phone of the defendant, which were determined to be coded drug-related conversations. On Sunday, Jan. 6, 2019, phone calls and text

messages revealed that a sale of narcotics occurred. Detectives arranged a controlled buy of heroin/fentanyl from the defendant following Ms. Sicoli's death using her phone, and the defendant was arrested on Possession with Intent to Deliver and related charges. The final autopsy report on Kathleen Sicoli determined the cause of death was ethanol, Xylazine, fentanyl, 3-methylfentanyl and despropionylfentanyl. (Xylazine is a sedative used by veterinarians in animals such as horses, cattle and other non-human mammals.)

DECEASED: Daniel Marinari, age 53, died on Dec. 27, 2018 in Upper Merion Township

DEFENDANT: MARK HERTZOG (DOB: 9/14/74): 513 Hamilton St., Norristown
CHARGES: Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (F1), Criminal Use of Communications Facility (F3), Possession with Intent to Deliver (F), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2) and Possession of a Controlled Substance (M).

ARRAIGNED: March 25, 2019, arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Paul Leo, who set bail at \$500,000. He was remanded to the Montgomery County Correction Facility.

PRELIMINARY HEARING: 9 a.m., April 8, 2019, MDJ Gallagher.

DEFENDANT: KURT W. ESPENSHIP (DOB: 9/20/66): 732 Hidden Valley Road in King of Prussia

CHARGES: Possession with Intent to Deliver (F), Involuntary Manslaughter (M1), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2) and Possession of a Controlled Substance (M).

ARRAIGNED: March 27, 2019, arraigned before Magisterial District Judge James P. Gallagher, who set bail at \$100,000 unsecured.

PRELIMINARY HEARING: 9 a.m., April 8, 2019, MDJ Gallagher.

DEFENDANT: MARQUESE H. GAINES (DOB: 4/2/91): 4235 N. Darien Street in Philadelphia

WARRANT ISSUED FOR HIS ARREST

CHARGES: Drug Delivery Resulting in Death (F1), Criminal Use of Communications Facility (F3), Possession with Intent to Deliver (F), Recklessly Endangering Another Person (M2) and Possession of a Controlled or Counterfeit Substance (M).

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION: On Thursday, Dec. 27, 2018, Upper Merion Township Police and Lafayette Ambulance Squad responded to a call of an unresponsive male. Police arrived to find Daniel Marinari unresponsive on the basement floor of the residence. A partially empty blue wax bag was located near the deceased. The bag was stamped with a skull and cross bones and the word DANGER. The investigation revealed that defendant Kurt Espenship had purchased three bags of heroin/fentanyl approximately 2½ hours earlier from defendant Mark Hertzog. As a result of an undercover operation on Dec. 28, 2018, detectives purchased four bags that were "the same as last night" from Hertzog. Then as the result of a separate undercover operation, detectives were able to arrange a buy for 14 bundles of heroin. The purported heroin/fentanyl was recovered and Gaines was subsequently arrested. The final autopsy report on Daniel Marinari determined the cause of death was fentanyl, heroin, hydroxine and ethanol toxicity.

While final overdose death numbers for 2018 are not yet available from the Montgomery County Coroner's Office, Steele says these four cases are indicative of how widespread the heroin-opioid-fentanyl epidemic has hit all parts of Montgomery County and in all age groups.

"These four deceased individuals are just a tiny fraction of the more than 200 who died through overdose in Montgomery County in 2018 and early 2019. We must stem the tide of these deaths and the widespread pain caused to individuals and families by heroin and opioid addiction," said Steele. "We need to make sure that those suffering from substance use disorder get the help they need. At the same time, we will continue to investigate and arrest these dealers who are profiting by selling these deadly drugs to stop them from killing more people."

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.