

UPDATE: Two dead in Laytonville stabbing incident

By Adam Randall, udjar@ukiahdj.com, @theadamrandall on Twitter

UkiahDailyJournal.com

Two people were killed and two others were injured early Sunday morning in a stabbing on Meadow Lane two miles northwest of downtown Laytonville by a 19-year-old man sleeping in the home, according to the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office.

The suspect, Talen Clark Barton, who was previously in foster care, awoke at approximately 12:15 a.m., and for reasons currently unknown, chose a 12-inch knife from the kitchen of the residence, and proceeded to enter the bedroom of a 17-year-old boy at the home, stabbing him, in what was described as a "very violent struggle," according to Sheriff Tom Allman, who spoke at a press conference Sunday afternoon, calling the incident a "gruesome scene."

A 54-year-old woman who heard the initial commotion came to the boy's aid, at which point, Barton attacked the woman. She is listed in critical but stable condition at a nearby hospital and is expected to survive, according to Allman.

Barton continued the brutality by attacking and killing a 52-year-old man, as the 54-year-old woman escaped down the stairs of the residence, who screamed and alerted two sleeping 17-year-old girls, Allman said.

Barton proceeded to attack an additional 52-year-old man, who was subsequently stabbed in the chest near the heart, but is expected to survive his injuries, Allman said.

After the crime spree, Barton told the two 17-year-old girls, who were unharmed in the incident, to not call 911 until 8 a.m. when he was supposedly to have transportation out-of-town, Allman said. He also ordered one of the girls to tie-up the dead 52-year-old victim and then herself with a cut phone charger. However, one of the girls talked him out of leaving and Barton called 911 himself around 12:46 a.m.

Upon the arrival of MCSO deputies around 25 minutes later from the Willits substation, the 54-year-old woman was found alive and a deputy was able to put pressure on her neck wounds, thus saving her life, according to Allman.

During MCSO's response, Allman said Barton changed his blood-soaked clothing and admitted to deputies after their arrival that when he's not sleeping, he's constantly getting high on marijuana, Allman said. Additionally, Allman said Barton was quite high upon MCSO's arrival and stated he had smoked marijuana while on the phone with dispatch.

Allman said the Sheriff's Office had a prior encounter with Barton in January 2013, but wouldn't disclose the details of that incident since Barton was a juvenile at the time.

Allman said the Sheriff's Office, California Department of Justice and the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office are continuing to investigate at the scene. The Long Valley Fire Department also assisted during the call.

No motive has been established as to why Barton committed the crimes, Allman said.

However, so far the investigation has led law enforcement to believe that in the past two weeks, Barton was telling a friend that he was planning on killing people, which wasn't brought to law enforcement's attention, according to Allman.

Several of the victims were from Canada and were relatives of the residents, Allman said. Law enforcement has been in contact with the Canadian Embassy to assist with family notifications.

Barton is being held at the Mendocino County Jail without bail on suspicion of two counts of homicide and two counts of attempted homicide. Allman said he predicts Barton will be arraigned Tuesday in Mendocino County Superior Court.

Child Protective Services is providing emergency housing for the two 17-year-old surviving girls, Allman said.

It was unclear if Barton was a true Laytonville resident. Allman said Barton wasn't originally from Mendocino County, and said he was unaware of how long he was here locally. At the time of the crime, Allman said all he knew about Barton's residential status was that he was sleeping at the home, but investigators have learned he was staying at the residence as part of a foster care situation. Allman said he wasn't going to discuss if any of the victims at the home were Barton's foster parents.

The names of the victims are being withheld pending next-of-kin notification, but are expected to be released, Allman said.

"Every detective in the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office is working on this case today," Allman said.