

Pro-Life News in Brief

BY Liz Townsend

Illinois Woman Charged with Killing Mother and Unborn Child

In a gruesome and tragic case, an Illinois woman has been charged with first-degree murder and intentional homicide of an unborn child in the September 15 deaths of Jimella Tunstall, 24, and her seven-month-old unborn baby girl. Police are also investigating Hall for the drowning deaths of Tunstall's other children, aged 7, 2, and 1.

Tiffany Hall, 24, allegedly knocked Tunstall unconscious and cut out her baby with a pair of scissors in a vacant lot in East St. Louis, Illinois, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

"I think it's sickening that you can actually do something like this," Tyronica Tunstall, Jimella's cousin, told the Post-Dispatch. "I hope Jimella wasn't living when the baby was cut out."

While Tunstall bled to death, Hall called 911 from a park in nearby Centreville, saying that she gave birth to a stillborn baby. Hall and the baby were taken to a hospital, where she told police several conflicting stories and refused to be examined by doctors, the Post-Dispatch reported. Since the baby showed no sign of trauma, her body was released to Hall.

After the baby girl was buried September 21, Hall confessed to her boyfriend that she killed Tunstall and claimed the baby as her own, according to the Chicago Tribune. The boyfriend, a sailor on leave from the Navy, called police and they soon found Tunstall's body and arrested Hall.

The next day, police discovered that Tunstall had three other children. After nationwide alerts and a massive search, investigators discovered the bodies of seven-year-old DeMond, two-year-old Ivan, and one-year-old Jinela stuffed into the washer and dryer in Tunstall's apartment, the Tribune reported. An autopsy later showed that the children, last seen with Hall, who often babysat them, on September 18, had been drowned and their naked bodies placed in the appliances.

Hall, currently in jail on a \$5 million bond, pled not guilty September 25 in Tunstall and the baby's deaths. Authorities are still investigating the murders of the three older children, and prosecutors expect to present the case to a grand jury October 6, according to the Associated Press.

Ohio "Choose Life" License Plate Lawsuit Dropped

A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Ohio's specialty "Choose Life" license plates has been dropped, as a result of the Supreme Court's June 26 refusal to overturn an appeals court decision approving similar plates in Tennessee, according to the Columbus Dispatch.

The license plates feature a drawing of a boy and girl with the phrases "Adoption builds a family" and "Choose life." They cost an extra \$30 each year, \$20 of which goes to groups that

counsel women about adoption. The plates became available last year, and 2,299 have been sold since then, the Dispatch reported.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), representing NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, filed the suit arguing that the license plate program unfairly promoted only one side of the abortion debate. The ACLU had already lost in one court, when U.S. Judge Donald Nugent upheld the Ohio plates in September 2005, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported. "There is an arguable benefit to the public in providing funding for adoption-related services separate and apart from any political or ideological arguments involved," Nugent ruled.

The case was on appeal to the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which had previously decided in March that Tennessee's Choose Life plates were constitutional. After the U.S. Supreme Court let the Tennessee appeals court decision stand, the ACLU knew the Ohio case had no chance for success in that court, according to the Dispatch.

"Our case had been stayed pending the outcome of the Tennessee case," ACLU attorney Carrie Davis told the Dispatch. "Once the stay was lifted, we filed to drop the case."

Studies Show Improvement after Adult Stem Cell Treatment of Heart Disease

Studies published in the September 21 edition of the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) show some modest but definite improvement after heart attack survivors were given stem cells obtained from their own bone marrow.

"Recent randomized studies of cell therapy for heart disease represent a milestone in this rapidly developing field while serving as a cogent reminder that many important clinical and fundamental questions have yet to be addressed," wrote Dr. Anthony Rosenzweig of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Stem Cell Institute in an editorial in the same issue of NEJM. "The ultimate success of this strategy is likely to depend on continued and effective coordination of rigorous basic and clinical investigations."

Although one study by a team in Norway did not show significant improvement in six months between patients who were given stem cells derived from bone marrow (BMC) and a control group who received no cells, two other studies from Germany were encouraging.

Researchers at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, led by senior author Andreas M. Zeiher, gave 204 patients who had suffered a heart attack either an injection of blood marrow stem cells or a placebo. At four months, according to the NEJM report, measurements showed that the improvement of the heart's efficiency in the BMC group was "significantly greater" than the placebo group.

"This double-blind and fully controlled trial provides the best evidence yet for beneficial effects of BMC after acute myocardial infarction [heart attack]," wrote Rosenzweig

Rosenzweig also wrote that the German researchers "found the rate of adverse clinical events to be significantly lower at 1 year among patients receiving BMC than among those receiving placebo. ... [I]t reinforces the message that BMC infusion is not only feasible but also safe, and it raises the possibility that clinical benefits may exceed the modest improvement seen in ventricular function."

Another study by researchers at Goethe University gave 75 patients either no cells, BMC, or cells derived from circulated blood, according to the NEJM report. The BMC group showed small but significant improvement after three months.

"Although the benefit observed after BMC infusion was modest ... , it is remarkable that any benefit was seen in these patients, who were studied on average more than 6 years after infarction and who were already receiving optimal medical care," Rosenzweig wrote. "The ... trial suggests that BMC can have effects beyond simple acceleration of healing after infarction. Whether repeated infusions would yield additive benefits and whether these benefits would persist will be important questions for future trials."

Abortion Leads to Murder-Suicide

According to an eyewitness, Plantation, Florida, police officer Laura Grunas blamed her boyfriend, firefighter Robert Peat, for the abortion death of her unborn baby before killing him and then turning the gun on herself, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported.

Reserve police officer and volunteer firefighter Michael Roth, a friend of the couple, watched as Grunas, 30, and Peat, 31, were fiercely arguing on the afternoon of August 4. Neighbors told the Miami Herald that Grunas was yelling, "Why is everyone blaming this on me? He killed my baby."

"Roth advised that Peat had told him that when they found out she was pregnant, they decided to terminate the pregnancy," Detective Brian Kendall wrote in a report, according to the Sun-Sentinel. "Peat was enormously upset about it due to religious beliefs, but felt that it was the right thing to do."

But Peat told Roth that after the abortion "things had been getting progressively worse."

Police were called to the scene and asked Grunas to leave, the Herald reported. However, Grunas returned at about 8 p.m. and confronted Peat. She then used her service revolver to fatally shoot him in the chest before killing herself, according to the Herald.

Friends, relatives, and fellow police officers and firefighters said they were shocked at Grunas and Peat's deaths. "[Grunas] had an outgoing personality, was pleasant to be around," Michael Hanlon, president of the department's Fraternal Order of Police lodge, told the Sun-Sentinel. "I never had the slightest inkling that this was going on."

"It's a terrible loss to everyone that worked with [Peat] and the fire department in general," Joe Hernandez, Peat's battalion chief, told the Sun-Sentinel.

Mother Arrested in Forced Abortion Attempt

The mother of a 16-year-old Columbus, Georgia, girl allegedly forced her twice to drink turpentine in an attempt to kill the girl's unborn baby, according to the Associated Press (AP). Rozzelletta Blackshire was arrested September 22 and charged with criminal abortion and first-degree cruelty to children. Also arrested were two cousins, Shonda Blackshire and Monica Johnson, who were charged with criminal abortion, the AP reported.

"The mother and two cousins were involved in forcibly having her to take a quantity of turpentine on two different occasions explaining to her that their help would help kill her baby and do away with her pregnancy," said Lt. J.R. McMichael of the Columbus Police Department, according to WTVM.

The unidentified girl told school counselors about the incidents, and police have placed her in protective custody, WTVM reported. Examinations have shown no injury to her or the baby, and she continues to carry the baby to term, according to WTVM.