

5° Clear



WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES

Serving the Watertown, Wisconsin area since 1895

Home > News > Local News

Cover-up alleged in death

Story Comments

Share Print Font Size: - +

Posted: Friday, October 5, 2007 12:00 am

By Kevin Murphy Special to the Daily Times | 0 comments

MADISON - Did Maranatha Baptist Bible College and the Watertown police cover up the cause of death of a college student in 2001 calling it a suicide instead of a homicide?

That is what is alleged in an equal protection lawsuit filed last week in federal court, which claims local police didn't properly investigate Joshua Leffring's death on campus on Sept. 29, 2001. Instead, the suit claims police denied Leffring's family access to investigators and instead required them to speak to David Lingle, who at the time was the dean of students, and is currently a member of the city's police and fire commission.

Leffring, 22, was a fourth-year student at college, well liked, about to graduate, and an unlikely suicide victim, said Madison attorney David Lasker who is representing the dead student's parents, Gerald and Terri Leffring of Muskegon, Mich.

He was very close to his brother (Jeremy) who also was a student on campus and he had just spoken to (Jeremy) shortly before the death occurred," said Lasker. The two brothers had just made plans to get together later that day to socialize and (Joshua) had a band and was about to release its first CD."

Joshua showed no signs of being depressed or suicidal and had a good social life," said Lasker.

Lingle said Lasker's allegation of a campus cover up is an absolutely bizarre statement." Lingle, who supervised the campus security employees at the time of Leffring's death, said he was satisfied with the police investigation and suicide conclusion.

Lingle said the police investigated the death and the college did nothing to impede the investigation or limit the family's access to police.

It's not my recollection that all the parents' questions were to come through me, but I haven't looked at this for over five years," Lingle said.

The family was very traumatized by the whole thing and out of respect for the family and the college I'm being very careful with my remarks (now)," Lingle said.

Lasker claims Lingle, now manager of the bookstore and snack shop, back in 2001 headed the investigation of Leffring's death. He said, The police gave it over to somebody who on behalf of the school had a strong reason to close the book on this case as a suicide and close it quickly," Lasker said.

When contacted in recent days, Deputy Police Chief Timothy Roets said the department had not been served with the suit and he declined comment on its allegations saying he couldn't immediately recall the investigation, which occurred six years ago.

The physical evidence in the case also doesn't add up to suicide, said Lasker. Joshua's death was caused by strangulation but Lasker has serious questions about whether the belt or similar device found on his body was taut enough for Leffring to have hung himself.

Also, students reported hearing a loud disturbance in Leffring's room before discovering his body, the attorney claims. Police were given the name of a fellow student who had opportunity and motive to harm Leffring but never considered him a suspect, said Lasker.

Other students present at Spurgeon dormitory at the time of Leffring's death were questioned but Lingle doesn't

Popular Commented Facebook Activity

Stories

Jefferson woman dies from crash injuries

Sandra A. Nimm

Hamann competency hearing

More

Photos

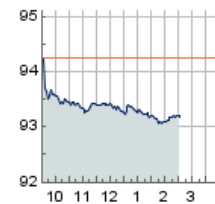
Videos

Stocks

Enter symbol Get Quote

Symbol lookup

NYSE NASD S&P



TickerTech.com Jan 23, 2014

Nyse ETF	93.22
↓ 1.05	↓ 0.65%
Nasd ETFs	421.39
↓ 3.43	↓ 0.08%
TTIx S&P 500 ETFs Index	1822.23
↓ 21.31	↓ 1.16%
Russell 2K	1181.292
↑ 5.569	↑ 0.474%
10 Yr Treasury Note EOD	2.86
↑ 0.03	↑ 1.06%

Active Markets Last Updated: 2:05PM CST 01/23/2014

remember them saying there was a "loud disturbance" coming from Leffring's dorm room prior to his death, as Lasker has contended.

Lasker said he couldn't discuss why the case wasn't filed until the last day before the six-year statute of limitations expired. He also said that there was no insurance settlement at stake as a motive to get the cause of death changed from suicide to homicide.

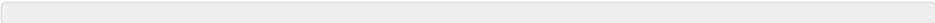
"It's important to the family that the truth be established, that's big motivating factor here, and the family is very concerned not only that it should never had happened but it could happen again. Police and people who operate colleges have a duty to protect the lives of students on campuses and that means getting out the important information," said Lasker.

According to the complaint:

Police falsified official reports, which mischaracterized evidence, omitted information disapproving of suicide as a possible cause of death and misclassified Leffring's death as a suicide. They then conspired to provide the false information to the public regarding the circumstances of Leffring's death.

Named as defendants are Maranatha, Lingle and former college president David Jasper; also police officer Marcia Repta; and former officers Terrence Krueger and Michael Hogan and Kenneth Severn.

© 2014 Watertown Daily Times Online . All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



Discuss Share Print

Posted in Local on Friday, October 5, 2007 12:00 am.

Rules of Conduct

- 1 Keep it Clean.**
Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language. PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CAPS LOCK.
- 2 Don't Threaten.**
Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated.
- 3 Be Truthful.**
Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.
- 4 Be Nice.**
No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.
- 5 Be Proactive.**
Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.
- 6 Share with Us.**
We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.

Welcome to the discussion.

Screen Name or Email

Password
 [Forgot?](#)

Remember me on this computer

[Need an account? Create one now.](#)