

Lake County Sheriff's Office

Christopher Covelli, Deputy Chief
Public Information Officer
Desk: 847.377.4180
Fax: 847.984.5738
Date: November 5, 2021



25 S. Martin Luther King Jr., Ave
Waukegan, Illinois 60087

www.lakecountyil.gov/sheriff

John D. Idleburg
Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

UPDATE: Investigation into Death of Yarianna G. Wheeler

Lake County Sheriff's Detectives have been working this case day and night since Wheeler's body was recovered from Lake Michigan, three miles southeast of the Waukegan Harbor. Wheeler was approximately seven-months pregnant at the time she was killed. Sheriff's detectives worked with the United States Coast Guard to determine the Lake Michigan water currents during the preceding several days, in an effort to find out where Wheeler might have entered the water. Additionally, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives followed-up on hundreds of leads throughout this investigation.

Wheeler was initially identified because someone recognized her from the composite Mount Prospect Police Detective/Sketch Artist Dirk Ollech drew.

After being identified, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives went to Wheeler's residence in Chicago. They obtained additional information and investigative clues. From there, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives quickly identified a person of interest. Through data they obtained, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives were able to determine Wheeler met with the person of interest and they were with each other near Oakwood Beach in Chicago. On August 30, 2021, Lake County Detectives went to Oakwood Beach, where they recovered evidence, including some of Wheeler's belongings. It was determined this location was likely a crime scene based on the evidence located. After conferring with Chicago Police Missing Persons Detectives, Lake County Sheriff's evidence technicians and drone pilots were sent to the Chicago scene to collect evidence and document what was discovered. Due to the crime scene being in the City of Chicago, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives turned their findings over to Chicago Police Homicide Detectives.

Chicago Police Detectives were subsequently able to arrest and charge Robert Drummond, 21, of the 4300 block of S. Berkeley, Chicago, with first degree murder.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "I am incredibly proud of the tenacious efforts of our detectives throughout this

investigation. Through their hard and diligent work, they quickly identified a person of interest, discovered the likely crime scene, and worked with Chicago Detectives to further the investigation. We will always do everything in our power to be the voice of victims who are unable to speak for themselves and hold those who victimized them accountable.”

All defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

UPDATE: Lake Michigan Jane Doe Identified (issued 8/28/21)

On August 27, 2021, a Lake County Coroner’s Office Forensic Odontologist compared the dental records collected by sheriff’s detectives to ‘Lake Michigan Jane Doe’s’ teeth/jaw. Following the examination, the Lake County Coroner’s Office confirmed ‘Lake Michigan Jane Doe’s’ identity is Yarianna G. Wheeler, 19, who was living in Chicago but originally from the 3200 block of West Wilcox Street, Bellwood.

Sheriff’s detectives continue investigating Wheeler’s death as a homicide and anyone with any information is encouraged to call Lake County Sheriff’s Detectives at 847-377-4148.

UPDATE: Detectives Believe Woman Has Been Identified (issued 8/27/21)

Due to the diligence of Lake County and surrounding area residents, sheriff’s detectives received dozens of tips as to the possible identity of ‘Lake Michigan Jane Doe.’ One of those tips led to a missing 19-year-old woman who was residing in Chicago. Sheriff’s detectives have obtained the dental records for the 19-year-old and the Lake County Coroner’s Office is working to confirm the identity.

Sheriff’s detectives are investigating this incident as a homicide. The autopsy of ‘Lake Michigan Jane Doe’ revealed she had several sharp force injuries on her body. The official cause of death is pending.

Detectives feel confident the missing 19-year-old Chicago woman is ‘Lake Michigan Jane Doe,’ however, public identification is being withheld pending official confirmation.

If you have any information about the victim or the incident leading to her disappearance and death, please contact Lake County Sheriff’s Detectives.

UPDATE: Seeking Assistance in Identifying Woman (issued 8/20/21)

Lake County Sheriff’s Detectives are seeking the community’s assistance in helping to identify the missing woman, “Lake Michigan Jane Doe,” pulled from Lake Michigan on August 15, 2021.

The woman was six to seven months pregnant. She was approximately 5 feet 4 inches and between 150-170 pounds. She had brown eyes and black hair, likely pulled back into a bun. Her fingernails and toenails were manicured and painted white. She was wearing a pink colored summer dress.

It's believed she was in the water for no more than seven to 12 days when recovered on August 15th, and she possibly entered the water anywhere from the northern Indiana shoreline to the northern Illinois shoreline of Lake Michigan.

If you have any information who this woman could be, please contact the Lake County Sheriff's Detective Lana LeMons at 847-377-4148.

The Lake County Sheriff's Office thanks sketch artist Dirk Ollech of the Mount Prospect Police Department for the rendition of the recovered woman.

The body of the man recovered around the same time was positively identified as Martin Mendoza, 49, of Waukesha, Wisconsin, who drowned near the 63rd Street Harbor in Chicago on August 8, 2021.

Detectives are confident there is no relation between the bodies of Mendoza and "Lake Michigan Jane Doe."

Sheriff's Detectives Investigating Two Bodies Recovered from Lake Michigan (issued 8/18/21)

The Lake County Sheriff's Office is investigating two adult bodies recovered from Lake Michigan on Sunday, August 15.

The body of an adult woman was recovered by the United States Coast Guard just after 3:00 p.m., after a fisherman witnessed a body floating in the water approximately three miles southeast of the Waukegan Harbor.

A short time later, at approximately 4:30 p.m., a United States Coast Guard helicopter was conducting a training exercise approximately three miles east of the Lake Forest shoreline, when the crew spotted the body of an adult man floating in the water. The Coast Guard subsequently recovered the body.

It appears the woman is between the ages of 18-40. She is African American, approximately 5 feet, 4 inches, and 150-170 pounds. Her fingernails and toenails were painted. She was wearing a summer dress. Based on preliminary information, it appears she was in the water for no more than two weeks. Sheriff's detectives are still working to identify her.

Sheriff's detectives are currently working with Chicago Police Department to determine if the man was an individual who went missing in Lake Michigan on August 8, 2021. The man is Hispanic, approximately 5 feet 6 inches and 180 pounds.

If you have any information about the possible identity of the female, please call Lake County Sheriff's Detectives at 847-377-4000.

###