

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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Woodstock man pleads guilty to supplying friend with deadly dose of drugs
State vs. Michael Dalton Waters

August 15, 2023 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on August 7, 2023, Michael Dalton Waters, 23, entered a non-negotiated guilty plea to involuntary manslaughter and distribution of controlled substances.

Charges stem from a May 2021 overdose fatality investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS).

On the evening of May 23, 2021, Waters crushed a pill into powder form and gave it to 20-year-old Talley Power and her 19-year-old friend. Waters told the two women that he was giving them Percocet. At the end of the evening, the friends went back to Power's home. The following morning, Power was found unresponsive and later pronounced deceased.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Division of Forensic Sciences determined that the cause of death was the toxic effects of fentanyl and tramadol. A toxicology screen of her blood found 14 micrograms of fentanyl and .21 micrograms of tramadol.

More often than not, drugs distributed on the street are non-pharmaceutical grade and therefore may contain substances other than that in which the user intended for introduction into the body, including fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.

"Under Georgia law, the distribution of drugs by an unlicensed individual is illegal regardless of whether payment is exchanged. It is especially reckless to share homemade pressed pills that could contain fentanyl. This defendant made a choice to give Talley Power drugs containing fentanyl. That decision cost her life," said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. "We commend the Sheriff's Office for conducting a thorough investigation into all aspects of this case, which ultimately led to the defendant being held accountable for his actions."

During the plea hearing, members of the victim's family stood before the court and described the pain of losing both Talley and her sister to drug overdoses – Talley's sister, Baylee Power, died of overdose in September 2020. Waters provided the narcotics that killed both the women but was not criminally charged for Baylee's death, which was ruled accidental.

"While the defendant may not have intended to kill Talley Power by giving her narcotics on the night of May 23, 2021, he knew that his actions were dangerous, and he knew all too well that fentanyl kills," said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Robert Morton. "Over the course of eight months, this man was directly involved in the death of two sisters. Through his actions, he destroyed a family, leaving unbearable grief in its place."

Georgia law provides a maximum sentence of 10 years for involuntary manslaughter and 30 years for distribution of drugs. The State argued for a combined sentence of 30 years, with 15 years to serve in prison for both charges. The Defense recommended a sentence to consist of probation and drug treatment.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker ordered the defendant to serve a 40-year sentence with the first 8 years to serve in prison. He was also ordered to avoid alcohol and drug use, receive treatment for mental health and substance abuse, and have no contact with listed family members of Talley and Baylee Power.

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad. It was prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Robert Morton, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

Dangers of Fentanyl

In 2020 and 2021, CDC data analysis showed that fentanyl overdose was the single leading cause of death among 18-45 year olds in the United States, according to Families Against Fentanyl.

Drug dealers add fentanyl to street drugs to increase potency and profits. Lacing other drugs with fentanyl enables drug dealers to stretch out their products since fentanyl makes drugs more powerful. Fentanyl is often added to drugs like heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana. It can also be made into pills to resemble prescription medications like Xanax and oxycodone. Drug dealers may mix deadly amounts of fentanyl into other drugs, then sell it to unsuspecting users, creating a high likelihood of overdose.

Signs of an overdose include small pupils, loss of consciousness, weak breathing, limp body, clammy skin, and bluish-colored skin. If you think someone is overdosing, call 911 immediately and administer naloxone if available.

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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