

SENTENCED: If ever granted parole, Ward would be under guidance of a parole officer for rest of her life

From the front page

consecutively—or one after the other—with her life sentence, but state law requires a life sentence to be served concurrently—or at the same time—as any other sentence a person receives.

Smallwood died on Feb. 19, 2023, from blunt force injuries to the head and body due to non-accidental injuries, which she suffered at the hands of Taylor, who Ward had left in care of Smallwood despite only knowing him for just a few weeks.

On the day she died, Smallwood had been in the sole care of Taylor since approximately 8:30 a.m.

The medical examiner that performed Smallwood’s autopsy following her death testified at Ward’s trial last month, noting that over 70 individual injuries were documented on the exterior of Smallwood’s body during the autopsy. Many of those injuries were also found in locations that are not associated with accidental injuries. But even the injuries found in places that tend to be susceptible to common injury were anything but normal.

Smallwood suffered multiple brain bleeds as well, and her brain showed obvious signs of swelling even after her death. According to testimony from medical experts during the trial, a three-year-old’s brain typically weighs anywhere from 900 to 1,000 grams. At the time her brain was examined, it weighed in excess of 1,100 grams, equating to approximately 120 percent of its normal size.

Text messages between Ward and Taylor from the

timeframe in which Smallwood was being abused were presented to jurors during the trial. Those texts detailed a variety of violent threats by Taylor toward both Ward and Smallwood.

“I’m going to beat your ass,” read one text sent to Ward from Taylor on Feb. 5, 2023. “I will leave this whole house a crime scene,” read another text from Taylor on the same day.

Two days later, Ward left her children alone with Taylor for the first time while she went to work.

On Feb. 11, 2023, Taylor sent Ward a series of text messages concerning her children, including: “Come get these.” “I can’t take this today.” “I’ve had them all day.” Ward responded: “They be alright til I’m done.”

The aggression and threats continued to escalate in the following days.

Texts sent to Ward from Taylor on Feb. 17, 2023: “It makes me want to kill you. Choke you to death.” “Come get your kids.” “I’ll ruin you.”

In the days leading up to Smallwood’s death, Ward failed to intervene in Taylor’s abuse of Smallwood.

During a text conversation between Taylor and Ward on Feb. 17, 2023, Ward wrote, “We’re never gonna get rid of the marks.” Additional phone data showed that on that same day, Ward searched for how to get bruises to go away fast and how to get scratches to go away fast multiple times.

On the day of Smallwood’s death, Taylor texted Ward, saying, “I’m about to flip on her” and “It’s her fault.”

Ward’s attorney, John Combs, attempted to con-

vince jurors that Ward was not aware of the abuse that Taylor had been subjecting Smallwood to.

According to Ward’s own testimony, she said she had attributed the many injuries to Smallwood’s “clumsiness” and what she believed to be Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease. And though Smallwood suffered from what Ward thought was Hand, Food and Mouth Disease, she failed to take her to the doctor to be seen, instead giving her Benadryl to treat the supposed symptoms.

Ward also admitted during her testimony to not knowing the full extent of Smallwood’s injuries, as Taylor had been the one who gave Smallwood her baths during that time, all of which were given while Ward was at work.

Following the trial, the jury deliberated for a little under an hour before convicting Ward in Smallwood’s death.

Per Kentucky’s sentencing guidelines, Ward will be parole eligible after serving 85 percent of her sentence or after serving 20 years, whichever comes first. With a life sentence, Ward would still be required to be under the supervision of a probation and parole officer for the remainder of her life, if she is ever granted parole.

Taylor is also currently serving a life sentence. He entered a guilty plea to charges of murder, first-degree sodomy and first-degree strangulation in October 2024. He has since been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

UC, Maiden Drug support future educators

University of the Cumberlands has partnered with Maiden Drug Company of Williamsburg to award the Deborah Carol Childress Endowed Scholarship Fund to two high school seniors from the Whitley County area who plan to attend Cumberlands this fall.

This year’s recipients are Emma Meadors of Williamsburg Independent High School and Jada Wilson of Whitley County High School.

Emma Meadors, daughter of Andrew and Tiffany Meadors, has excelled academically throughout her high school career. She plans to continue that success in college by

establishing a strong study routine. Emma chose Cumberlands because its environment and values align with her Christian faith.

“As I’ve grown up, I’ve seen everything they’ve done for the community, and I hope to be a part of that as well,” she said. Emma’s goal is to become an elementary math teacher.

Jada Wilson, daughter of Jason and Gina Wilson, is also a high-achieving student with a deep love of learning. She selected Cumberlands for its supportive atmosphere and shared values.

“The faith-based approach to student learning means a lot to me. It’s

also just a beautiful campus, and I love that it’s located in my hometown,” she shared. Jada plans to pursue a career in teaching to help others discover a love of learning.

The Deborah Carol Childress Endowed Scholarship Fund was established in 2005 by Cumberlands alumni Jonathan and Roger Powers, owners of Maiden Drug Company, in honor of their late niece. The scholarship is designed to help local students pursue a college education.

To be eligible for the award, students must plan to pursue a career in education and enroll in one of the various education programs offered at Cumberlands.

Pro wrestling returns

Allied Pro Wrestling will be returning to the old Corbin Civic Center off Gordon Hill for a Saturday evening show. “We would love to have a full civic center,” said co-owner Shane Romines.

Romines, who co-owns the promotion along with Henry Shaw, said that Allied Pro Wrestling hadn’t been at the facility for a while, but it is returning celebrating its third anniversary this season.

Romines, who is a local attorney by day, will be in the ring performing Saturday night. Romines noted that due to a wrist injury, he is doing a little more managing rather than in ring work these days. He currently manages a heel faction called “The Firm.”

The event is expected to feature six or seven matches and each show usually runs about two hours. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. and bell time is 6 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 each. Romines added that this is a family-friendly show, and everyone is welcome to attend.

MASTER COMMISSIONER SALES

In order to comply with the orders of the Whitley Circuit Court, the Master Commissioner will sell the property described in the following action(s) on THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2025 at the hour of 12:00 noon, at the door of the Whitley County Judicial Center, (new courthouse), 100 Main Street, Williamsburg, Kentucky.

For each sale- individually: The said property shall be sold to raise the amounts hereinafter set forth, together with interest and the costs of the action, and upon the (unless otherwise indicated) following terms and conditions.

(A) At the time of sale the successful bidder shall either pay cash or make a deposit of 10% of the purchase price with the balance on credit for THIRTY (30) DAYS. In the event the successful bidder desires or elects to credit the balance, he or she will be required to post bond and furnish an acceptable surety thereon. Said bond shall be for the unpaid purchase price and bear interest at the rate the judgment bears, from the date of sale until paid in full, and shall have the force and effect of a judgment. The bond interest rate charged on any unpaid balance is listed for each case shown in Upcoming Sales.

(B) The purchaser shall be required to assume and pay all taxes or assessments upon the property for the (2025) year and all subsequent years after this sale. All other delinquent taxes or assessments upon the property for prior years shall be paid from the sale proceeds if properly claimed in writing and filed of record by the purchaser within ten (10) days from the date of sale.

(C) The property shall otherwise be sold free and clear of any right, title, and interest of all parties to the action and of their liens and encumbrances thereon, excepting easements and restrictions of record in the Whitley County Court Clerk’s Office and such right of redemption as may exist in favor of the United States of America or the defendant(s).

(D) If the property does not bring two-thirds of its appraised value, a six (6) month right of redemption will exist pursuant to KRS 426.530 (revised July 15, 2014).

THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES WILL BE SOLD:

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. II, CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-CI-598: UBANK, f/k/a UNION BANK OF JELICO, PLAINTIFF, VS. WENDY BARNES, ET AL, DEFENDANTS. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale in favor of Defendant John Siler, entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on April 22, 2025. The judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2018 Tax Bill in the original sum of \$332.52; plus accrued interest in the amount of \$223.06 through March 31, 2025, an administrative fee of \$115.00, pre-litigation attorney’s fees of \$332.52, and reasonable attorney’s fees expended herein the amount of \$2,000.00, for a total judgment being \$3,003.10. Property Address: 419 N 3rd Street, Williamsburg, KY 40769. Parcel/Map ID#: 110-20-00-083.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. I, CIVIL ACTION NO. 20-CI-560: HAZEL ENTREPRISES, LLC, PLAINTIFF, VS. APEX FUND SERVICES C/F CERES TAX, COUNTERCLAIMANT/RECEIVABLES, LLC, CROSS CLAIMANT, VS. JAMES ROBERT HILL, ET AL, DEFENDANTS. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale in favor of Counterclaimant/Cross Claimant, Apex Fund Services C/F Ceres Tax Receivables, LLC, entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on April 8, 2025. The judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2009 Tax Bill in the original sum of \$354.45; plus an administrative fee of \$115.00; plus interest in the amount of \$485.60 as of 03/11/2025, with a per diem of \$.12 from that date until paid in full; plus prelitigation attorney’s fees in the amount of \$283.56, as well as litigation Attorney fees of \$2,849.65; plus costs in the amount of \$810.40 for a total balance due as of 03/11/2025 of \$4,898.66 plus interest at 12% on the actual purchase price of the certificate of delinquency; plus other fees and costs that Counterclaimant/Cross Claimant, Apex Fund Services C/F Ceres Tax Receivables, LLC may continue to accrue. Property Address: 2909 Tyes Ferry Rd., Rockholds, KY 40759. Parcel/Map ID#: 159-00-00-019.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. II, CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-CI-327: Charles Adam Huff, Plaintiff, VS. Terry W. Mullis, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on April 8, 2025. The judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The sum of \$11,000.00 remaining due under the land contract; plus his costs and expenses occurred herein shall be reimbursed to Plaintiff, Charles Adam Huff. Property Address: 486 Burkhart Hollow Road, Rockholds, KY 40771. Parcel/Map ID#: 140-00-00-030.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. II, CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-CI-334: Mortgage Assets Management, LLC f/k/a Reverse Mortgage Solutions, Inc., Plaintiff, VS. Kenneth Reynolds, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on February 5, 2025 and March 19, 2025. The in-rem judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The sum of \$213,599.83 as of July 30, 2023, together with all sums that may be due for interest, taxes, insurance, loan advances, escrow advances and/or fees for inspections, property preservations or other expenses incurred by Plaintiff, for which total judgment amount of \$230,864.37 as of February 6, 2024, plus other fees and costs that Plaintiff may continue to accrue. Property Address: 2200 Croley Bend Road, Williamsburg, KY 40769. Parcel/Map ID#: 109-00-00-143.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. I, CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-CI-441: Specialized Loan Servicing LLC, Plaintiff, VS. Leslie Willis, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on April 3, 2024 and subsequent Orders entered September 4, 2024 and February 5, 2025. The In Rem judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The principal sum in the amount of \$40,097.31, plus interest on the principal sum at the rate of

4.5% per annum from August 1, 2022 until paid.; plus the costs and fees of this action; plus attorney’s fees; plus sums advanced in payment of ad valorem taxes, insurance premiums, winterization, or in preservation of the real estate; plus any and all fees, costs, attorney’s fees, and other advance made pursuant to the terms of the Note and Mortgage, and additional amounts permitted. Property Address: 35 Jackson Subdivision, Williamsburg, KY 40769. Parcel/Map ID#: 128-00-00-066.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. I, CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-CI-451: PNC Bank, National Association, Plaintiff, VS. Alan M. Gajos, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on May 8, 2024, and a subsequent Orders entered November 7, 2024, and April 8, 2025. The judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The principal sum in the amount of \$48,620.89 from September 1, 2023; plus interest thereon from August 1, 2023 in sum of \$1,724.94 as of March 29, 2024 accruing therein at the rate of 5.3750% per annum (\$7.1599 per diem); as well as late charges, amounts advanced by Plaintiff for taxes and insurance, and other charges and costs, including Plaintiff’s attorney fees and costs incurred and accruing for a total no less than \$54,748.62 as of March 29, 2024, with post-judgment interest thereon to accrue at the rate of 5.3750% per annum until paid. Plus any amounts incurred after March 29, 2024, plus any additional attorney’s fees and costs, expenses etc. and additional amounts permitted. Property Address: 350 Oak Grove School Rd., Corbin, KY 40701. Parcel/Map ID#: 103-00-00-165.02

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. I, CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-CI-009: TAX BRAKE KY LLC, PLAINTIFF, VS. CHRISTOPHER GLENN CREEKMORE, ET AL, DEFENDANTS. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on October 8, 2024, and a subsequent Order entered March 20, 2025. The in rem judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: (1) The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2019 Tax Bill No. 4783 in the original sum of \$364.09; plus combined statutory interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date of purchase of 04/27/2021 through 09/30/2024 (\$3.64 per month x 41 months) equaling \$149.28, plus prelitigation attorney’s fees in the amount of \$261.90, plus administrative fees of \$115.00; the total of which is presently \$890.27 plus other fees and costs that the Plaintiff may continue to accrue. (2) The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2020 Tax Bill No. 4750 in the original sum of \$342.66; plus combined statutory interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date of purchase of 08/10/2021 through 09/30/2024 (\$3.43 per month x 38 months) equaling \$130.21, plus prelitigation attorney’s fees in the amount of \$175.00, plus administrative fees of \$115.00; the total of which is presently \$762.87 plus other fees and costs that the Plaintiff may continue to accrue. (3) The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2021 Tax Bill No. 4726 in the original sum of \$338.33; plus combined statutory interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date of purchase of 08/09/2022 through 09/30/2024 (\$3.38 per month x 26 months) equaling \$87.97, plus prelitigation attorney’s fees in the amount of \$0.00, plus administrative fees of \$115.00; the total of which is presently \$541.30 plus other fees and costs that the Plaintiff may continue to accrue. (4) The sum for certificate of delinquency for 2022 Tax Bill No. 4732 in the original sum of \$330.78; plus combined statutory interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date of purchase of 09/20/2023 through 09/30/2024 (\$3.31 per month x 12 months) equaling \$39.69, plus prelitigation attorney’s fees in the amount of \$0.00, plus administrative fees of \$115.00; the total of which is presently \$485.47 plus other fees and costs that the Plaintiff may continue to accrue. (5) Plus Litigation attorney’s fees arising from litigation of this matter in the amount of \$3,000.00. which shall continue to accrue; and any expenses and costs incurred in the amount of \$1,710.73 for a total present sum of \$7,390.64. Property Address: 137 Mount Morgan Road, Williamsburg, KY 40769. Parcel/Map ID#: 093-30-04-008.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. II, CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-CI-306: United Wholesale Mortgage, LLC, Plaintiff, VS. Michael Thomas, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on February 24, 2025 The judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: (1) The sum of \$239,290.75 as of January 3, 2025, plus interest at the current rate of 5.37500% until paid, plus additional fees, costs and expenses incurred by Plaintiff, plus other fees and costs that Plaintiff may continue to accrue. Property Address: 316 Oaklawn Circle, Corbin, KY 40701. Parcel/Map ID#: 119-40-02-029.00

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY, 34TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT, DIVISION NO. II, CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-CI-490: Vanderbilt Mortgage and Finance, Inc., Plaintiff, VS. Joseph L. Lawson, et al, Defendants. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Whitley Circuit Court on March 20, 2025. The in-rem judgment against the Defendants, plus costs, is as follows: The sum of \$99,204.11 (which includes principal of \$95,215.38, interest as of September 11, 2024 of \$3,730.99, late fees of \$102.33, escrow advances of \$187.63, service charges of \$10.00, and credit for partial payments of \$42.22), with interest thereafter on the principal balance at the rate of 8.77% until paid in full, pre-judgment foreclosure costs expended herein of \$1,234.60, reasonable attorney fees and costs of \$1,450.00, any other charges that Plaintiff may continue to accrue. A 2020 Clayton manufactured home VIN: CAP035052TNAB- will be included in the sale of the real property. Property Address: 242 Logan Road, Corbin, KY 40701. Parcel/Map ID#: 088-00-00-002.02 (land only). Parcel/Map ID#: 088-00-00-002.09 Parcel/Map ID#: 088-00-00-002.09M1 (a/k/a 088-00-00-002.02M1 as reflected on 2023 Tax Bill)

Dated this 13th day of May, 2025.
HOWARD O. MANN, MASTER COMMISSIONER
WHITLEY CIRCUIT COURT
P. O. BOX 1344, CORBIN, KY 40702
PHONE: 606-528-0616