



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

Manslaughter indictment for 2009 death in Milton mental health residence

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A former Brockton woman was arrested at her apartment in Birmingham, Alabama Tuesday on indictment warrants for Manslaughter and Permitting Serious Bodily Injury to a disabled person by a Caretaker out of Norfolk Superior Court, District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey announced today, Sept. 26, 2012.

In September 2009, 56-year-old Lauren Wolf, a person with a disability [as defined by MGL Chap. 265 Sec. 13K (a)] resided in a group home at 2 Kahler Avenue in Milton. That home was operated by Vinfen Corporation and funded by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. According to the home's mission statement, it "provides residential services to adults with major psychiatric disorders." Four men and another woman resided there at the time.

On the evening of September 7, 2009, Lauren Wolf began to choke on a piece of steak. The indictment alleges that Annie Kwankam, 57, and then of Brockton, was a "Residential Counselor II" working in the facility and that Kwankam observed Wolf get up from the table, put her hands around her throat to signal that she was choking, and ask for assistance in a distorted voice before falling. The indictment alleges that Kwankam, notwithstanding her training and duty as a caretaker, failed to provide necessary assistance and instead walked away.

"The central events in the case were quickly established by investigators from the State Police, Milton Police and DMH," District Attorney Morrissey said following Kwankam's arrest in Alabama on the warrant. "Since being notified of this in October 2009, this office has utilized the Norfolk County Grand Jury to subpoena and collect the evidence establishing probable cause to assert that Kwankam's actions, and inactions, on that day rose above mere negligence to the 'wanton and reckless' conduct necessary to sustain a manslaughter charge. That investigation entailed the identification, collection and analysis of hundreds of pages of documentary evidence, and Assistant District Attorney Brian Wilson has undertaken this with great diligence."

The secret indictment was handed down by the Grand Jury on July 31, 2012 and Massachusetts law enforcement has been working to affect her out of state apprehension since that time. Kwankam was arrested by the Birmingham Police Department. "She will first face a court in Alabama to determine whether she will waive her right to contest extradition to Massachusetts," Morrissey said. "We will know if she is to be extradited in a matter of days or a matter of months based on her response to Massachusetts' request that she return at that rendition hearing."

All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.