



Sheriff Robert Pickell says Grand Blanc homicide another casualty of heroin problem

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By Khalil AlHajal | The Flint Journal

GRAND BLANC, Michigan — Police believe the victim in **yesterday's homicide** was **strangled to death by heroin dealers**, and Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell described the incident as another in a series of suburban drug-related deaths.



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(Emily-Rose Bennett | The Flint Journal)

Grand Blanc Police Chief Steve Solomon and Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell answer questions at a press conference at Grand Blanc City Hall on Friday afternoon concerning the Thursday homicide of a Grand Blanc woman in her home.

"When you're dealing with drug dealers, you're dealing with violent people," said Pickell about two suspects arrested yesterday after Jeanne Hank, 47, was killed in her apartment near East Reid and South Saginaw Roads.

The suspects have **not yet been charged** by the prosecutors office. Pickell described the two as known heroin dealers. A third person of interest in the case was arrested on an unrelated warrant and is still being interviewed by police.

"We're still putting the case together to present to the prosecutor," Pickell said.

An autopsy revealed the cause of death to be strangulation, said Grand Blanc Police Chief Steven Solomon.

"To strangle somebody, that's a very violent thing to do," Pickell said.

He said the victim struggled with heroin and cocaine addiction.

"The victim in this case is the sister of one of my deputies," Pickell said. "This family has suffered greatly from the drug problem that this woman has had for years."

Pickell said a worsening drug problem throughout the county has led to several recent deaths.

Four deaths as a result of opiate overdoses have occurred in recent weeks in Fenton, Fenton Township, Tyrone Township and Lapeer.

"It's like a burgeoning tide," Pickell said. "Here's another case of a woman who had a heroin addiction. Once again, drug abuse has led to violence in the suburbs."

Pickell said the victim's father initially believed the death to be a suicide, but that a paramedic who arrived on the scene saw it differently.

"She recognized immediately that this is a suspicious death," Pickell said.

Solomon said the investigation that led to the three arrests in the case was conducted in a team effort involving Grand Blanc Police, the Sheriff's Office, the Genesee Auto Theft Investigation Network, State Police and the FBI.

"It was a coordinated team effort," Solomon said. "We were able to bring this to resolution within 12 hours."

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