



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
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State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that on December 15, 2022, **Rayshawn Smith (DOB 3/1/1976)** was sentenced by the Honorable Judge Jennifer Clifford to natural life for the offense of First Degree Murder.

In the early morning hours of July 23, 2022, Ashley Hardin was reported missing from her residence by her minor child. Ashley Hardin and her child smelled an odor of gasoline and went outside to investigate. Ashley never returned to the residence. During an investigation, officers learned that Ashley and Rayshawn Smith had previously been in a dating relationship. The defendant posted a video on FaceBook indicating "People are going to wonder why I did what I did" and referred to Ashley in the video. Officers located Ashley who was pronounced deceased on scene and also located the defendant in his vehicle with evidence pertaining to the crime. Among other injuries, Ashley suffered from two gunshot wounds.

The defendant had previously open pled to the charge of First Degree Murder with a firearm enhancement. The Honorable Judge Jennifer Clifford sentenced the defendant to 60 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, which is the maximum possible sentence for First Degree Murder, and additionally sentenced the defendant to natural life for the firearm enhancement.

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, the Rockford City Police Department, and Rockford Fire Department conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant State's Attorney Ali Friend handled the prosecution.

CONTACT PERSON:

J. Hanley, Winnebago County State's Attorney
815-319-4700