

# Murder-for-hire plot alleged

• Alliance police arrest 2 men in April slaying of woman. Former boyfriend is accused of paying to have her killed

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**ALLIANCE:** More than three months after the brutal slaying of a young mother of five in her Alliance home, two Portage County men are behind bars accused of participating in a murder-for-hire plot.

Joseph L. Wilkes, 19, of the 600

block of Hazen Street in Ravenna is charged with aggravated murder for the April 1 slaying of Yvonne C. Layne, 26, of the 900 block of Devine Street in Alliance.

Alliance Police Chief Lawrence A. Dordea said David G. Thorne, 26, of the 2500 block of Porter Road in Atwater was charged with complicity to murder. He said

Wilkes already has confessed to the slaying.

Thorne is a former boyfriend of Layne's and the father of her fourth son, Brandon, 2.

Layne was nearly decapitated when her throat was slashed during the early morning as four of her sons slept. The eldest of her sons, who range in age from 1 to 10, was being raised by her parents.

"I'm in shock," said Layne's father, Sherman Layne, when told of

the arrests. "I didn't suspect him (Thorne) at all. I'm just in total disbelief and can't understand it because he was paying child support for his son.

"I'm glad they caught someone," Layne said. "I hope they have the right person."

Layne said Thorne had been his daughter's boyfriend for just under two years.

"He (Thorne) acted so nice and everything. I just can't believe it," Layne said.

Layne also said he was stunned to learn that the killing was an apparent murder-for-hire. He said he raised that possibility with authorities about a week ago and was told that police didn't think that was the case.

Dordea declined to disclose how much Wilkes was paid to kill Layne. Dordea said that police know the motive, but he wouldn't say what it was. He would say

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# HIRE

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only that the slaying wasn't drug-related.

Both suspects were booked at the Stark County Jail, where they were being held on \$1 million bonds each after their arrests yesterday afternoon.

Dordea said Wilkes was arrested at his home by Alliance detectives at about 2 p.m. Thorne, whose son, Brandon, had been living with him since just after the slaying, was found at his girlfriend's Springfield Township home.

"Thorne had been a suspect since day one," said Dordea. "He has been elusive ever since we talked with him the day she was killed. The case came together as the result of a tip from another individual, making it possible for us to finally bring charges against both men."

The slaying was the first of two in Alliance and one of seven across Stark County so far this year. Stark had 23 homicides in 1998.