

Motive for murder is alleged

• Detective: Child support at root of hired-killer case

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ALLIANCE: A Portage County man paid an acquaintance \$200 to kill the mother of his 2-year-old son so he wouldn't have to pay child support, a police detective testified yesterday.

The case of David D. Thorne, 26, of Atwater Township was bound over to a grand jury yesterday after a preliminary hearing in Alliance Municipal Court.

Thorne is charged with complicity to aggravated murder for hire. He could receive the death penalty if convicted. He is being held in lieu of a \$1 million cash bond.

Thorne is accused of paying Joseph I. Wilkes, 19, of Randolph Township to kill his former girlfriend, Yvonne Layne, 26, of Alliance. Wilkes was indicted Thursday on a charge of aggravated murder for hire with a death-penalty specification.

Police say that Wilkes has confessed to killing Layne in her home the night of March 31 as four of her sons slept. A fifth son lives with her parents in Alliance.

Layne's body was found about 12:30 p.m. April 1 by her mother. Her neck had been slashed and arteries severed.

Thorne and Wilkes were arrest-

ed July 14, five days after police received a phone tip that Wilkes might be the killer.

Detective Lloyd "Bud" Sampson testified yesterday that a woman called police saying that she and her then-boyfriend, a former high school classmate of Wilkes', had talked with Wilkes about 8 p.m. March 31 at Carnation Mall. Wilkes told them he was in town to "do a job," then said he was there to kill someone, Sampson testified.

Neither the former classmate nor his girlfriend said anything to police until July 9, when the woman called authorities. She said that her romance had soured and she had received threats that she was going to be killed "the same way as that Alliance young lady."

Sampson said police asked Wilkes to meet them at the Ravena Police Department, where after a few minutes of questioning he "blurted out his confession."

Wilkes told police that Thorne had wanted Layne killed so he wouldn't have to pay her child support for their 2-year-old son, Brandon, Sampson said.

Wilkes told authorities that Thorne was his trainer in the martial-arts sport of shootfighting, a

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HIRE

• Detective implies teen used payment to shop

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cross between jujitsu and kickboxing. The detective said the suspects had been acquainted for about four years.

Sampson said Wilkes told authorities that Thorne had driven him to a motel near Carnation Mall in the early afternoon of March 31 and given him a \$100 bill for a room.

Thorne then told Wilkes to buy a pair of gloves and a knife to slash Layne's throat that night, Sampson testified.

Later that night, Wilkes walked to the mall, where he saw his former classmate and the girlfriend. Then he walked the three miles to Layne's house and entered unannounced, telling her that Thorne had sent him to see how she was doing, Sampson said. She had met Wilkes once, when Thorne had come to pick up Brandon for visitation.

The two sat on the couch talking until Layne turned her head

as if she had heard one of the children stirring. That's when Wilkes pulled the fold-up knife from his pocket, grabbed her by the hair and slashed her throat, Sampson said.

"She jumped off the couch and turned to Mr. Wilkes and asked, 'Why?'" Sampson said.

"I told Yuvonne that David wanted me to," Sampson quoted Wilkes as telling police.

Wilkes told authorities that Layne fell to the floor and died.

He ran back to the motel, dropping the knife in a storm sewer and throwing the gloves into a restaurant trash bin.

The knife was found where Wilkes said he had discarded it, as was a pair of pants he said he had worn that night and left near a friend's home in Ravenna. The gloves weren't found.

Sampson said that Wilkes was paid the \$200 before April 2, when the daughter of the family with whom he lived took him shopping. They bought work shoes and sneakers for the unemployed Wilkes and then tossed into a trash container at the Stow-Kent shopping center in Stow the old sneakers he told police he had worn the night of the slaying.