

Man convicted in murder-for-hire case

The Associated Press

CANTON — A man has been convicted of hiring a friend to kill the mother of his young son.

David Thorne, 27, of Atwater, was convicted by a Stark County Common Pleas Court jury which began deliberating Monday in the death of Yvonne Layne, 26, of Alliance.

Thorne faces a possible death sentence after being convicted of a charge of complicity to aggravated murder and a specification that the crime was committed for hire.

The sentencing phase of his trial begins Thursday.

Prosecutors said Thorne wanted the victim killed so he could get custody of their 2-year-old son and avoid court-ordered support payments.

Layne was found dead in her home last March 31. Her throat had been slashed as four of her five children slept nearby.

Joseph Wilkes, 19, of Ravenna, testified Thorne paid him \$200 to kill the woman. Wilkes, who pleaded guilty as a part of an agreement to avoid the death

penalty, is serving a life sentence in the case.

The defense contended that Thorne had been making support payments and said the motive provided by the prosecution didn't make sense.

Thorne put his head in his hands as Stark County Common Pleas Judge Richard Reinbold read the verdicts.

The victim's father, Sherman Layne, said and family members who attended the trial were happy with the verdict, but distressed about details that came out during the proceedings.

"We think it was the right verdict," Layne said. "We think the jury did a good job. It was fair and impartial."

Jurors were sent home and told to return to the courthouse Thursday for the penalty phase.

They will be sequestered during their deliberations, and Reinbold told them to pack for two days.

Layne hopes the jury recommends death for Thorne. Layne said his daughter "would be alive today if it hadn't been for (Thorne) arranging this."