

Officials: Two sold drugs that caused pregnant woman's death

October 12 2017

The daughter of a Wisconsin legislator who has worked to stem the opioid epidemic provided the drugs that caused the death of a pregnant woman, investigators said Thursday.

Brown County sheriff's officials said they are recommending a long list of charges against 28-year-old Cassandra Nygren and her 33-year-old boyfriend, Shawn Gray, including first-degree reckless homicide by delivering drugs. The two have not yet been formally charged but could appear in court later Thursday.

Chief Deputy Todd Delain said Nygren and Gray provided the fentanyl that killed Jennifer Skeen, who was about six months pregnant when she died near Green Bay in June. The fetus also did not survive. An obituary listed Skeen's age as 31.

At a news conference, Delain described the couple as mid-level dealers who sold drugs to support themselves and their drug habit. When officers attempted to arrest them on Oct. 10, Delain said they fled in a car with Nygren's 14-month-old child inside. They were later taken into custody.

Nygren's arrest is the latest chapter in her long battle with drugs. She spent two years prison after a near-fatal overdose. She was released in 2014, becoming an advocate for sobriety, but was convicted again in 2015 of drug possession and admitted to drug court, an alternative program aimed at helping participants fight addiction.

Nygren's struggles spurred her father, Republican Rep. John Nygren, to sponsor numerous bills aimed at curbing opioid addiction over the years. Republican Gov. Scott Walker has signed nearly 30 bills sponsored by Rep. Nygren since 2013 that deal with opioids.

The lawmaker said in a statement that his daughter's arrest is another example of "the disastrous and destructive consequences" of addiction.

"Cassie has publicly struggled with addiction and recovery for several years. This is a strong reminder of how fragile the road to recovery is. We will continue to support and pray for her recovery," he said.

He also extended condolences for the loss of life. "There are no words that we as a family can offer to give any real comfort for this tragic loss," he said.

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