

Update: Hiawatha Woman to Stand Trial on Murder Charge

(KNZA)--A Hiawatha woman will stand trial on charges--including first-degree murder--in the March beating death of a 4-year-old boy.

Following more than seven hours of testimony from eight witnesses, 28-year-old Janice Summerford was bound over to Brown County District Court Wednesday on six felony counts contained in an amended complaint filed by County Attorney Kevin Hill prior to her preliminary hearing. Arraignment was set for October 28th.

Besides the murder charge, Summerford is also charged in the amended complaint with abuse of a child, obstructing apprehension or prosecution and three counts of interference with law enforcement.

Summerford had been charged with three counts--including aiding and abetting murder in the 2nd degree.

The child's father, Lee Davis IV of Hiawatha, is currently behind bars serving a nearly 20-year prison sentence after being convicted on an amended charge of second-degree murder and felony child abuse.

Authorities says Summerford was Davis' live-in girlfriend and was the child's primary caregiver.

Davis took the stand Wednesday and testified Summerford was responsible for his son's death. Davis said he heard Summerford bang his son's head against a wall on March 3rd where he had been told to stand after taking a toy from one of Summerford's children. He said he came into the room to discover his son convulsing and unresponsive. After putting him in a shower and still not being able to get him to respond, Davis says he took the boy to the Hiawatha Hospital. He was then flown to Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City where he died two days later.

Davis denied ever beating his son or causing any of his injuries. He said he pleaded no contest to second-degree murder because he felt guilty that he hadn't protected his son from Summerford.

Many Signals Communications