

CHILLING NEW DETAILS



He came up
behind them and
EXECUTED
THEM
by shooting them
in the back of
the head.”

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Patrols keep eye out

BY PAUL LAROCCO
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Suffolk police plan to keep a closer watch on independent pharmacies in the aftermath of the Medford drugstore killings, a department spokeswoman said.

Following Sunday's shootings, Community Oriented Police Enforcement and Crime Control units were pulled from normal duties. One shop owner noticed a patrol car outside her store's front door; another had an officer enter the business to check in.

In the wake of Wednes-

day's arrest of a suspect, police have returned the special unit reinforcements to their normal duties, but patrol officers have been directed to keep a "heightened awareness" of pharmacies on their beats — particularly independent pharmacies that are increasingly targets of robberies for controlled-substance painkillers, the spokeswoman said yesterday.

Howard Levine, executive director of the Long Island Pharmacists Society and owner of Belmont Drugs in West Babylon, said he hoped the increased presence doesn't fade away.

Last year, as local U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents were doubling their pharmacy break-in investigations, Levine's store was held up twice.

"Had the police come in before, I might have been a little more prepared," Levine said. "We need to know, because for every guy they lock up, there's 10 more behind him."

The Medford killings have made pharmacists take stock of their own procedures with security in mind, said Joanne Hoffman Beechko, president of the local pharmacists society and operator of Rx Ex-

press in East Northport.

Common practices, from the dispensing and storing of pills to monitoring the amounts carried, will be reviewed. "Basically everything," she said.

A law enforcement source said David Laffer, the Medford suspect, stole as many as 10,000 hydrocodone pills.

Levine, meanwhile, said it will take legislation limiting quantities that can be prescribed — and the doctors able to prescribe them — to bring change.

"We can't let these people just die in vain," he said of the four Medford victims.

FAMILY: RX ABUSE MUST BE CURBED

BY WILLIAM MURPHY
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In an impassioned plea, the family of one of the Medford pharmacy victims yesterday urged legislators, doctors and the pharmaceutical industry to do more to curb rampant prescription drug abuse.

The call for action, voiced outside a Lake Ronkonkoma funeral home, came just hours after David Laffer, 33, of Medford, was arraigned on murder charges in the quadruple slaying in the drugstore.

Laffer stole more than 10,000 pills of hydrocodone, a synthetic opiate used in Vicodin, a police source said.

"The widespread proliferation of prescription painkiller abuse is fast becoming a national tragedy," Ray Malone said in a statement read outside Moloney's Lake Funeral Home & Cremation Center.

"It's already a tragedy to us. It must be, and it can be, stopped or at least significantly curtailed if we all do our part," said Malone, whose brother James had once been married to victim Jaime Taccetta, whose private wake was being held inside.

The statement urged people to pressure legislators to enact laws curbing prescription drug abuse; called on doctors to think hard before prescribing such medications, and implored pharmacies to stop selling the highly addictive pills.

The plea drew praise from one substance abuse agency, but caution from a doctor.

The prescription opiate crisis hasn't been "dealt with in a serious way, and now we are seeing the collateral damage," said Jeffrey Reynolds, executive director of the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.

However, Dr. Ron Kanner, chairman of neurology for North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, said that while prescription painkillers are widely abused, they serve a useful medical purpose.

'She was eager to be friends'

Sweet, friendly and all too eager to please — that's how some who knew Melinda Brady described the woman police say drove the getaway car in Sunday's deadly Medford pharmacy holdup.

Some who grew up with Brady, 29, said yesterday that they were struggling to understand how the quiet loner they remember from Sayville High School could have gotten involved in a drug-related killing that left four people dead.

"The Melinda I did know, she was not a pill popper," said Allie Bates, 29, of Riverhead, who said she was close friends with Brady during high school and reconnected with her via Facebook shortly after her marriage to accused shooter David Laffer.

But others who met Brady and her husband more recently, through Laffer's participation in amateur street hockey leagues, said Brady talked openly and often about the painkillers she took to control severe discomfort from tooth surgery and stomach ailments.

"She would give up that she was on painkillers to anyone who happened to be listening," said Brian Wilson, owner of the Nassau-Suffolk Dekhockey rink in Farmingdale.

Still unclear is what propelled Brady from the manicured West Sayville neigh-

This story was reported by **Sophia Chang, Victor Manuel Ramos, Jennifer Smith** and **Olivia Winslow**. It was written by Smith.

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Melinda Brady, wife of slaying suspect David Laffer

borhood where she grew up to the St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center bed where she awaits arraignment on charges of robbery and obstructing government administration.

"I don't think she was ever in a lick of trouble," said schoolmate Peter Regan, 29, of Sayville.

"She was a sweetheart," Regan said. "She was eager to be friends with people. If you were to talk to her, she would keep it going."

Regan and Bates said Brady had trouble fitting in. "Kids are cruel," Bates said. "There was teasing behind her back."

Brady graduated from Sayville High School in 2000 and enrolled at Suffolk County Community College in the fall of 2001, according to district and

college officials. A neighbor said she worked for a time at the Sun-Vet Mall in Holbrook.

Kim Fazzi of Charlotte, N.C., said she and Melinda Brady used to hang out about seven years ago, when Fazzi still lived in New York. She said Brady liked to go out dancing and drinking, and described her as fun, but clingy and eager for attention. "She would call me all day," Fazzi said. "I wound up getting caller ID because of her."

Brady met Laffer through mutual friends, according to their 2009 wedding announcement. It was an event whose planning she chronicled exhaustively through posts on message boards on the local wedding Web site liweddings.com.

Other posts referred to chronic dental problems and oral surgery for which she was prescribed painkillers.

"I only take it if I really have to. I really hate taking them," she posted in June 2008.

That's around the time that Wilson and his employees said Brady and Laffer had been frequenting his Farmingdale rink.

Street hockey acquaintances said Brady would wait for hours on end as Laffer played match after match.

Those acquaintances said the Laffers faded away from their circle, first moving from league to league, until he abruptly quit a Bethpage team at the beginning of this year. "We just never saw them again," Wilson said.