

LOCAL SCENE

Thursday, Jan. 24

- W8 Watchers meeting, 107 W. Walton, extension center, Warrenton, weigh-in 5 p.m., meeting 5:30 p.m.
- Wright City Board of Aldermen meeting 6:30 p.m., city hall.
- Artisan Guild meeting, 7 p.m., handicap Building behind the old firehouse, Warrenton.
- St. Luke's Mobile Mammography Unit, Warren County Health Department, 101 Mockingbird Lane, Warrenton, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Adult book bingo, Scenic Regional Library, Wright City, 1 p.m.
- Story Night, Scenic Regional Library, Wright City, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 25

- Alcoholics Anonymous Group 130 meeting, senior center, 501 Ashland Ave., Warrenton, 8-9 p.m.
- Live music, Deerfield's on Main, 6-9 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 26

- Holy Rosary Gala dinner, dance and auction, Holy Rosary Gym, doors open at 5 p.m.
- Live music, Downtown Pub and Grill, 101 W. Booneslick Road, Warrenton, 8 p.m.
- Live music, Deerfield's on Main, 6-9 p.m.
- Kids Club (grades first-fifth), Scenic Regional Library, Wright City, 1-2 p.m.
- Benefit Dance and Silent Auction to benefit the family of Mike Borgmann, Maverick's Bar & Grill, Marthasville, 3 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 27

- Frank Stanek and the Country Limits, Lions Club Hall, Warrenton, 1-4 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 28

- Al-Anon, College United Methodist Church, 701 E. Main St., Warrenton, 7 p.m.
- Alcoholics Anonymous Group 130 meeting, senior center, 501 Ashland Ave., Warrenton, 8-9 p.m.
- Wright City Lions Club, 7-10 p.m.
- Story Time for Preschoolers, Scenic Regional Library, Warrenton, 6:30 p.m.
- Warrenton Elks Lodge bingo, 6:30 p.m., 1102 E. Veterans Memorial Parkway.

Tuesday, Jan. 29

- Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), 5:15 p.m., Grace Bible Church, 25445 S. Highway 47, Warrenton.
- Story Time for Preschoolers, Scenic Regional Library, Warrenton, 10 a.m.
- Chicks With Sticks, crochet or knitting lessons, Scenic Regional Library, Warrenton, 1 p.m.
- Charles Dickens tea party, Scenic Regional Library, Warrenton, 6 p.m.
- Cocaine Anonymous, 116 S. Main St., Bellflower, 5:45 p.m.



CREWS BATTLE HOUSE FIRE

Area firefighters fought a blaze at a home in Warrenton Jan. 22. The fire destroyed a mobile home on Honeysuckle Court in Warrenton. Firefighters from Warrenton, Wright City and other area departments responded to the scene. Record photo/Adam Rollins.

HUNTER

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Hunters' brief and troubled marriage. Rosenblum said Nick Hunter was often erratic, his moods alternating between loving and enraged. He said Nick had previously physically and sexually abused Ashley, and often brought up divorce but never followed through.

Ashley Hunter made similar statements to law enforcement during more than 10 hours of interviews the night of the shooting, video of which was played for the jury. That night, she said, the abuse was different. She said she was afraid Nick was actually going to kill her.

Rosenblum described his client's actions as self-defense in fear for her life. He said the verbal altercation became physical, and that Ashley went upstairs to comfort her two children, who are from a previous relationship, and tell them to stay in their room. She came back downstairs to find Nick with a gun in his hand, Rosenblum said. He said Ashley was assaulted again, and fought back as she was pushed up against a wall.

At some point Nick dropped the gun, and Ashley picked it up and began shooting wildly, without thinking, Rosenblum said.

"In her soul, she knew she was going to die right there in that living room, with her kids in the room above," Rosenblum told the jury.

Prosecution

Prosecutors and investigators described a different interpretation of the evidence. Kelly King, the prosecuting attorney, said deputies did not observe any signs of injury or trauma on Ashley, despite the fact that Nick outweighed her by at least 100 pounds. If there had



Prosecutor Kelly King

Ashley would surely show some sign of injury, and items would be disturbed in the living room where it happened.

Showing a photo to the jury of Ashley Hunter, taken after the shooting, King pointed out a lack of injuries. "This is not a photograph of a woman who was just in the fight of her life," King said.

On top of that, King said Ashley made conflicting statements to investigators about how events had unfolded that night, such as how or when she got the gun. That is not the behavior of someone telling the truth, King told the jury.

What investigators concluded is that the Hunters had a verbal argument with no assault for around 30 minutes, King said. At that point, the prosecutor said, Ashley Hunter walked upstairs, had time to reflect on what she was doing, got a gun and went back down to shoot her husband.

"Whatever happened was over when she went up there," and the shooting could not be justified as self-defense, King told the jury. She said investigators could not corroborate Ashley Hunter's claims of prior abuse.

Based on an autopsy report describing the direction bullets had traveled through Nick Hunter's body, King said the most likely explanation is that the shooting began as he was standing up from a seated posi-

the floor.

Rosenblum dismissed prosecutor's description of events as "unsupported theory and speculation." He said Ashley Hunter might not have appeared injured because she bruise differently and might not have shown. He pointed out that Nick Hunter could have assaulted Ashley without disturbing any of furniture.

Rosenblum also attacked credibility of the chief investigator on the case, Lt. Detec Scott Schoenfeld of the Warren County Sheriff's Department. Rosenblum described Schoenfeld as a "dog with a bone," saying the detective had an axe to charge Ashley Hunter with murder.

Schoenfeld defended the objectivity of the investigation while testifying at trial.

Deliberation

Left to reconcile these very different versions of events the jury was given explicit instructions from Judge Sutland. While jurors could consider a range of lesser charges including involuntary manslaughter, the burden was Warren County prosecutors prove Ashley Hunter had committed a criminal act when she shot her husband, Sutherland said.

The judge instructed jury that shooting and killing someone is permissible under Missouri law if the shooter is the aggressor, is in fear for their life, and believes deadly force necessary to defend themselves.

The jury was released from court to deliberate on the verdict just after 3 p.m. They returned at 6:45 p.m., and delivered a verdict of not guilty for the charges of murder and armed criminal action.

Hunter was released from custody and allowed to return to her family Monday night, nearly four years to the day after being arrested and incarcerated at