

Altoona Mirror

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Gloria Gates Care captures Fed title

\$2.50 Vol. 142 - No. 40 of our 152nd year

FRIDAY

July 31, 2026

IN BLOOM



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmundski

Calvary Cemetery grounds crew member Jamie Maybush weeds a bed of flowers along Pleasant Valley Boulevard in Altoona on Monday afternoon.

Motions rejected in stabbing death case

Oeschle defense unsuccessful in effort to suppress evidence

By RACHEL FOOR-MUSSELMAN
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HOLLIDAYSBURG — A Blair County judge denied and dismissed five motions for relief filed by defense counsel for the city man charged in the 2023 stabbing death of 42-year-old Christopher Helsel.

President Judge Wade A. Kagarise issued an opinion on the



Oechsle

petition for habeas corpus and four separate motions to suppress evidence in the case of Raymond Thomas Oechsle Jr., 54, who is accused of killing Helsel in April 2023 at an apartment building on the 2000 block of Eighth Avenue in Altoona.

Oechsle is facing charges of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, single felony counts of third degree-murder, robbery, criminal trespass, as well as two

felony counts each of burglary and aggravated assault. He also faces single misdemeanor counts of abuse of a corpse, tampering with evidence, theft and possession of an instrument of crime with intent.

In the petition for habeas corpus, defense attorney Thomas Dickey argued that Oechsle's charges were not supported by the evidence in the prosecution's case, so Oechsle's confinement was illegal.

Kagarise dismissed this argument, writing in his opinion that "upon entry to Oechsle's first

floor apartment, the police discovered a deceased person who had been stabbed about 98 times."

He stated that testimony given in prior hearings established that Oechsle was taken into custody, where he waived his Miranda rights and admitted to stabbing Helsel.

"(Oechsle) told the officers that when he pulled out the knife and started to stab Mr. Helsel that Mr. Helsel began to backpedal and retreat, but (Oechsle) continued to follow him," Kagarise wrote.

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Man pleads no contest to sexual assault of child

Roberts sentenced to 10 years' probation

By RACHEL FOOR-MUSSELMAN
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HOLLIDAYSBURG — The city man who was caught sexually assaulting a 10-year-old girl in September 2022 pleaded no contest to the 15 felony counts against him Thursday afternoon and was sentenced to 10 years' probation.

Christopher Hauck Roberts, 36,



Roberts

was charged with five felony counts each of indecent assault of a person less than 13 years of age, unlawful contact with a minor – sexual offenses and corruption of minors – defendant age 18 or above after he was seen lifting the victim's shirt and bra and touching her exposed chest.

Court documents state the victim was sleeping at the time and

the witness ran into the room to confront Roberts. She and the girl then left the residence and reported the incident.

In a subsequent interview with police, Roberts said his curiosity got the best of him and admitted to touching the girl five or six other times in the last month. He told officers that he knew what he did was wrong and that he made a bad decision, court documents state.

Before Roberts' sentencing, First Assistant District Attorney

Nichole Smith told Senior Judge Timothy M. Sullivan that she had spoken to the victim and her family about the plea agreement and that they were on board. Sullivan then heard impact statements from the victim and her mother.

The victim told Roberts that he "made a choice that changed my childhood."

"Gymnastics was a huge part of my life," the victim said. "You destroyed that. You took that away from me."

See **Pleads**/Page **A3**

Executive Director John Kearns and board President Susan Wentzel unveil the new logo for the Huntingdon County Arts Council Thursday morning.



Mirror photo by Colette Costlow

Arts council launches rebrand

By COLETTE COSTLOW
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HUNTINGDON — Community members gathered inside the Huntingdon County Arts Council building Thursday morning to celebrate the company's official rebrand, marking the beginning of a new era.

Executive Director John Kearns and board President Susan Wentzel

unveiled their new logo to the audience, featuring shapes and colors inspired by the building's stained glass windows.

Designed by Juniata College students enrolled in the Community Design Lab, the new logo represents a major milestone for the nonprofit, as they've been renovating their new home at the Methodist church on 313 12th St. for more than four years, Kearns said.

However, he said many passersby today don't realize the council lives inside the former church, which is why their new signage featuring the logo can flip that narrative.

"We used the emphasis of now we're here, we're established, we're growing, it's time to take a fresh look at our image and get it out there," he said.

See **Rebrand**/Page **A4**

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