

Bloody ax, journal depicting violence found at Chelsea double homicide, police testify

A District Court judge will determine whether a teenager accused of killing 2 men in Chelsea last year will be tried as a juvenile or as an adult.

By **KEITH EDWARDS**
Staff Writer

AUGUSTA — When Maine State Police detectives entered the Chelsea home where a teenager is accused of killing two men and injuring a woman, they found signs of violence, a journal depicting a deadly act, an ax and security cameras that had been turned toward the wall.

That testimony came on the third and final day of the bind-over hearing at the Capital Judicial Center to determine whether the teen will be tried as an adult. During the hearing, the woman who survived the June 2025 attack also described what she saw.

The boy is charged with murder in the deaths of Christopher Hunnewell, 43, and Hunnewell's adopted son, Ty Carter Hunnewell, 22. The Kennebec Journal is not yet naming the suspect because he is a juvenile.

Hugh Landry, a state police detective who led an evidence response team at the crime scene, testified that the Hunnewell home was in disarray when he and other investigators entered it. Walls and carpeting in the home were stained with red-brown spots, he said.

Landry, looking at photographs from the scene on Friday, identified the body of Christopher Hunnewell, with cut marks on his head and blood pooled underneath him. In the living room, where his body was found, police also found an ax, with red-brown stains on it later determined to be blood. They also found a fingerprint in the blood, which Landry said was later identified as belonging to the juvenile.

Landry said the marks on Christopher Hunnewell's head were consistent with marks that would have been made by the ax.

Police also found a knife, also with red-brown stains on it, upstairs in the home.

Some of the several family members and friends of the victims cried during parts of Landry's testimony.

Landry said he also spotted two security cameras, one in the kitchen and



Maine State Police evidence technicians worked in Chelsea at the scene of two killings in June. (DYLAN TUSINSKI/STAFF WRITER)



Defense attorney Kurt Peterson speaks at a bind over hearing for a juvenile charged with killing two men in 2025 in Chelsea Wednesday at the Capital Judicial Center in Augusta. (JOE PHELAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

another on the mantle in the living room, that were plugged in but had been turned to face the walls. The teen's fingerprints were found on at least one of the cameras, he said.

Police also found a journal, in what is believed to be the teenager's make-shift bedroom, with hand-drawn comic-strip sketches depicting a deadly attack with an ax.

Bryce Scott, a state police trooper who was patrolling the area on June 11, 2025, said he responded around 8:40 p.m. to a report of an emergency where someone was injured or deceased in Chelsea.

When he arrived, he found the teen, in a black hoodie, pacing back and forth, and handcuffed him without incident. The trooper stayed with the teen as other police arrived, and rode with him to the hospital in an ambu-

lance and remained with him at the hospital.

Scott testified the teen was visibly distressed and crying, stating to the trooper that, "Everybody was right about me." The boy also stated he was a "monster" and asked to be killed, Scott said.

The teen is also accused of attacking Chili Mulgado, 23, now of Florida, who was Ty Carter Hunnewell's fiancée and was living with the Hunnewells in June 2025.

Mulgado testified via video Friday that she and her fiancé were upstairs playing video games when the teen called from downstairs for Carter Hunnewell to come help Christopher Hunnewell, whose nickname was CJ, work on a mold problem in the home's bathroom.

She said it seemed odd that the boy, and not CJ, would call upstairs, but she

said he sounded very calm, so Carter Hunnewell went downstairs to help.

Mulgado said she was putting on her shoes to go downstairs, too, when she heard her fiancé scream, "Help me!"

She went downstairs and saw the teen stabbing Carter Hunnewell repeatedly.

Mulgado, who suffered serious injuries in the attack and was hospitalized, said she tried to stop the teen from stabbing Carter Hunnewell, grabbing the knife by its blade. The teen wouldn't let go.

Their battle spilled outside onto a porch, then onto the ground. Mulgado was screaming for help: "I think he's trying to kill me!"

She said she finally managed to get control of the knife, at which point she said the teen screamed, "Please don't kill me!" and ran off. She went inside to call 911.

If the teen remains in the juvenile system, he could be sentenced to Long Creek Youth Development Center and released at age 21. If he's tried as an adult and found guilty of murder, he could be sentenced to 25 years to life in prison.

Family members of the victims said Christopher Hunnewell and his wife, Jessie Carter, took in the teen — a relative — as a foster child after he had cycled through other foster homes.

Peter Schleck, director of the state Legislature's Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability, attended

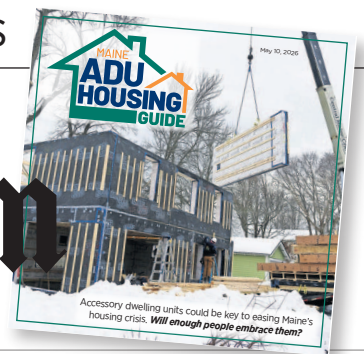
the hearing to observe the proceedings. The Maine Legislature's Government Oversight Committee previously ordered that office to investigate the Department of Health and Human Services' involvement with the teen in the Chelsea killings.

Lawmakers said previously that they were troubled by reporting in the Press Herald detailing interactions the teen and his family had with DHHS's Office of Child and Family Services. Carter told the Kennebec Journal that she and her husband had raised concerns with DHHS about the boy's mental health and had sought another foster home for him.

The teen, who is slender and has long, shaggy black hair, attended the first two days of the hearings, but not Friday's session.

One of his attorneys, Walter McKee, said juveniles are not required to attend such hearings and because Friday's session was expected to be shorter, it didn't make sense to bring him up from Long Creek in South Portland, where he's being held.

District Court Judge Charles Dow, who presided over the three-day hearing, will make his decision on whether the teen will be charged as an adult after lawyers for both sides submit their closing arguments in writing. The process is expected to take at least a month.



\$5.00
Sunday,
May 10, 2026

Maine Sunday Telegram

EST.
1862

16 YEARS, 17 HOMES

What a tragedy in Chelsea reveals about the gaps in Maine's child welfare system

Family members raised concerns about a troubled foster child's mental health for years. The state wouldn't, or couldn't, help.

By DYLAN TUSINSKI
Staff Writer

By most accounts, the teenager had a rough childhood. His dad would hit him, his stepsister recalled, and their mom often smelled of alcohol. Many said the boy displayed violent tendencies from a young age.

He was removed from his parents' custody by age 6 and put in the care of another family member. It became a familiar routine. For years, he bounced through more than a dozen unstable homes and unsafe family environments. It did little to improve his mental health.

So when another family member, a cousin, finally offered to be his 17th foster home in 2023, the family and state child welfare officials hoped it would provide him much needed stability.

No one expected it would end how it did.

Police were sent to the home in Chelsea on the night of June 11, 2025. A woman who called 911 lay injured in the front lawn. Her boyfriend, Ty Carter Hunnewell, and his adopted father, Christopher Hunnewell, were dead inside the house. The teenager had killed them, the caller said.

The 16-year-old was arrested and has since been charged with murder.

Please see **CHILD**, Page A12



Maine State Police investigate at a home on Windsor Road in Chelsea, the scene of a double homicide last June. A boy, 16 at the time, faces murder charges and is being held at Long Creek Youth Development Center in South Portland. (JOE PHELAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)



Alan Gardner, a technician with Tri County Radon, retrieves a testing kit from the cafeteria at Great Falls Elementary School in Gorham while conducting radon testing last month. (PHOTOS BY DEREK DAVIS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

SOME MAINE SCHOOLS HAVE UNSAFE LEVELS OF RADON MOST HAVEN'T BEEN TESTED

Just 12% of the state's school buildings were assessed in the past 5 years, and nearly a quarter of those had elevated levels of the cancer-causing gas.

By RILEY BOARD and JOE LAWLOR
Staff Writers

A year and a half ago, Christy Crocker was working with an enthusiastic school district to help test for radon in its building when all of a sudden, administrators called it off.

Her nonprofit organization had received money to help schools cover the cost of testing for the naturally occurring radioactive gas that is abundant in the state's bedrock and is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.

INFOGRAPHIC:
How radon enters your home / **A10**

Even though radon poses a known threat in Maine — and can be especially harmful to young children — Crocker, who is the director of the Maine Indoor Air Quality Council, said it's common for districts, especially small rural ones with other financial and safety challenges, to overlook the issue.

That was the case for the district she was working with. Administrators became concerned Crocker's program, which also equips students with tools to



Radon gas is colorless, tasteless and odorless. The only way to know if there is an issue is to conduct testing, which involves individually assessing every single ground-floor room in a building and can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$20,000 per school.

test their own homes, would uncover issues that the community couldn't afford to fix.

"To say we were surprised is an understatement," she said.

But she understood that for the small district, it likely wasn't a priority. Something that can't be seen, smelled or tasted doesn't feel real, Crocker said, and

school districts facing numerous financial pressures have to pick their battles.

Maine passed a law in 2019 encouraging schools to test for radon, after scaling back the original version that sought to mandate testing without providing state funds.

Please see **RADON**, Page A10

Streaming mad: Sports fans can struggle to keep up



Many cord-cutting sports fans, like Emily Cook, of Augusta, grapple with the myriad streaming subscriptions required to stay connected to their favorite teams. "I was driving myself insane," she says. (ANNA CHADWICK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

While it's true they're able to follow their favorite teams with unprecedented access to games, navigating the streaming services — and paying for them — can be frustrating.

By DAVE DYER
Staff Writer

Sports super fan Emily Cook, like many New Englanders, grew up in a die-hard Red Sox family. The Augusta resident loves watching hockey, soccer and the Olympics. She's also enjoyed the growth of women's professional sports and tries to watch as many events as she can.

Often, it's a struggle to stay connected. The problem?

"A few months ago, I realized (my apps) didn't have Universal and NBC Sports stuff, because I went to watch the soccer game and went, 'Why can't I find this?' I was driving myself in-

“Friday nights, when Apple TV has a Red Sox game, my phone blows up with people who turn on NESN and can't find the game.”

TOM CARON

NESN anchor and Lewiston native who has been with the network since 1995

sane," she said.

Cook is hardly alone, as many cord-cutting sports fans across the country grapple with a myriad of streaming subscriptions that are often required to watch professional and collegiate sports.

Even cable subscribers must add different sports packages in order to see every NFL, NBA,

NHL or MLB game.

And it all comes with a mounting cost.

According to a 2026 sports viewership report, American households spend an average of \$122.93 per month — \$1,475.16 a year — on streaming subscriptions to watch sports.

Please see **SPORTS**, Page A9

INDEX

Happy Mother's Day
Read our food feature / **F1**

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Advice/TV..... | H5 | Classified..... | D6 | Horoscope..... | H5 | Screen Time..... | E3 |
| Almanac..... | A3 | Crosswords..... | H4-5 | Jobs..... | D6 | Sports..... | C1 |
| Antiques..... | H3 | Deaths..... | B3-7 | Maine Millennial..... | D4 | Varsity Maine..... | C1 |
| Audience..... | E1 | Deep Water..... | E3 | Movies..... | E5 | Weather..... | B8 |
| Books..... | E4 | Food & Garden..... | F1 | Opinion..... | D1 | World/Nation..... | A3-8 |
| Leslie Bridgers..... | B1 | Homes..... | H1 | Public Notices..... | H2 | The Wrap..... | F3 |



Volume 138
Number 47

© Copyright 2026
Maine Trust for Local News



Maine State Police work outside a home on Windsor Road in Chelsea where two men were killed in June 2025. The teenager who is facing two counts of murder never really had a stable home, and the Office of Child and Family Services had been involved with him since his birth in 2009. (PHOTOS BY JOE PHELAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

CHILD

Continued from Page A1

The Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram is not yet naming the suspect because he is a juvenile pending the outcome of court proceedings.

Details about the teen's upbringing in the rural Kennebec County town southeast of Augusta were made public for the first time last month during a bind-over hearing, a court proceeding to determine whether he will be tried as an adult. The hearing lasted three days as relatives, caseworkers and attorneys presented facts about the boy's early life.

Family members said Christopher Hunnewell had taken the boy in as a foster child two years prior and had raised concerns about his mental health, but that their interactions with caseworkers had become sparse to nonexistent. "I had vocalized that there was something wrong here. I knew for a long time if he stayed, something horrible would happen," Jessie Carter, Hunnewell's wife, told the Press Herald shortly after the killings. "No one listened."

The family did not want to be interviewed for this story. In prior conversations, Carter and others said they believe the killings could have been prevented.

For years, Maine has been plagued by a series of deaths of children whose short lives intersected with the state's child protective system. In most cases, a high-profile death was followed by internal reviews of practices to see what might have gone wrong and calls for reform to ensure it didn't happen again.

But the Chelsea case represents an entirely different dynamic. The child who entered the system wasn't the one killed but the one suspected of doing the killing. Several experts told the Press Herald it's the first time in Maine this has happened.

They cautioned against viewing the killings as an indictment of Maine's child welfare system alone. Though Maine's Office of Child and Family Services has been marred in



Anybody who's helping to take care of kids in some capacity, educators, medical providers, are all part of the child welfare system. And there are plenty of places where kids fall through the cracks. ... Sometimes, it's a matter of kids needing services and resources that don't exist.



MARK MORAN

social services director, Eastern Maine Medical Center, and former chair of Maine's Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel

recent years by high turnover and excessive caseloads, it exists within Maine's broader healthcare and behavioral health systems.

And those systems have been faltering for years.

"Anybody who's helping to take care of kids in some capacity, educators, medical providers, are all part of the child welfare system. And there are plenty of places where kids fall through the cracks," said Mark Moran, social services director at Bangor's Eastern Maine Medical Center and former chair of Maine's Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel.

"Sometimes," he added, "it's a matter of kids needing services and resources that don't exist."

THE CHILD'S HISTORY

The teenager never really had a stable home. The Office of Child and Family Services had been involved with him since his birth in 2009, program administrator Melissa Beaulieu said during last month's hearing.

His mother had a blood alcohol content of 0.2% when the boy was born, she said, more than double Maine's limit for driving under the influence. Caseworkers believed she'd been drinking throughout the pregnancy.

The child was placed in the care of his father, who was out on probation following several years in federal prison on drug charges. The state ordered the mother not to contact her son and closed the case a few months later. But the boy's situation didn't improve.

During last month's hearing, the boy's stepsister testified that their father had bounced in and out of the criminal justice system. She said she witnessed him physically and sexually abuse the boy, although

it's not clear if he was ever charged.

Their mother, meanwhile, ignored the no-contact order. She moved back in with the family and soon began using alcohol and drugs again, her daughter testified.

In 2013, the Office of Child and Family Services received an anonymous tip about the boy's living conditions. When caseworkers visited their house, Beaulieu said they found cigarette butts, animal feces and empty alcohol bottles inside his room. The child, about 5 at the time, was taken into state custody.

What followed was a series of turbulent family placements and foster homes that seemed to fall out from under him.

One of his caretakers, a family member, was arrested for drug trafficking. Other foster parents said they weren't equipped to handle the boy's behavior, which Beaulieu said included cutting himself with a steak knife and making threatening and sexually explicit comments toward other children at school and at home.

Walt McKee, who is representing the boy, did not respond to questions about his time in the child welfare system.

"Seventeen homes is many more placements than is typical. And in every one of those moves is trauma for the child," said Melissa Hackett, coordinator of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network. "And it becomes increasingly difficult to find an appropriate placement that can meet those needs."

Beaulieu said the boy was hospitalized over suicidal ideation in spring 2023. He spent two weeks there before being placed in the care of his cousin, Christopher Hunnewell, who had also been abused as a child, according to Carter, his wife.

Hunnewell wanted to offer

the boy the resources he never got, she said. But the situation there soon deteriorated. "We noticed early on he really had some mental issues," Carter said last year.

Steven Carey is an attorney who has served as the boy's guardian ad litem, a court-appointed position tasked with representing the child's best interests, since 2020. Carey testified last month that he had visited the home in fall 2024 and told state officials the boy needed to be removed.

Carey said the boy wasn't in school while living in Chelsea. He had been diagnosed with a mood disorder. The family, troubled by his behavior, moved him out of his bedroom and made him sleep on a mattress on the dining room floor.

Carey said another visit a few months later was "better but still rocky." He last saw the boy in April 2025 and thought the situation had improved. Carey said the family was doing "everything they could to keep him there."

Two months later, Hunnewell and his adopted son would be found dead inside their home.

SYSTEM BUCKLING UNDER ITS OWN WEIGHT

Maine's child welfare system has been under duress for years.

Between 2019 and 2024, the state's foster population grew at a rapid pace. In 2023, Maine was removing children from abusive or neglectful situations at a higher rate than nearly anywhere else in the country.

That was partly in response to a number of high-profile deaths of kids in the child welfare system. In some instances, caseworkers failed to monitor children in abusive environments. In others, conflicting guidelines led them to overlook visible signs of trauma.

The rising caseload has resulted in what some staff members previously described as a "broken" system, with caseworkers being stretched to the brink and working mandatory overtime to meet kids' needs.

Christine Alberi serves as Maine's child welfare ombudsman, an independent position that investigates complaints and advocates for the safety of kids in the state's custody. She noted that there is an "enormous gap" between services available for young children in Maine compared with those for older teenagers, like the boy in Chelsea. Often, kids who are close to aging out of the system receive less intensive care than they require.

"My office has been necessarily critical of child welfare casework and at times the direction of child welfare set out by its leaders. And there is not nearly enough money invested in children who have suffered trauma," Alberi wrote in an email. "However, it should be noted that this year, for the first time in years, we have seen some incremental im-

provements."

The state's 2026 and 2027 budgets will each allocate more than \$17 million specifically toward Maine's child welfare system. The number of kids in state custody, while still high, has fallen since peaking in 2024. Vacant caseworker positions have fallen nearly 54% in the last two years, according to Lindsay Hammes, spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services.

But the state's child welfare system, experts note, is still subject to the same headwinds as the rest of the state's healthcare system: Shuttering facilities, staffing shortages and the challenges of offering services in sparsely populated rural areas have made expanding Maine's behavioral health infrastructure an uphill battle.

DHHS often endures the most scrutiny whenever there is a tragic outcome. Hackett, with the Maine Child Welfare Action Network, said that's because services on the "crisis end of the spectrum" are generally the most visible.

But it's the upstream services that could stem issues before they present themselves, she said, that are the most acutely lacking.

"We really have to ask the bigger questions about why so many kids are so unsafe. And that really brings us to much broader questions about parental substance use, unmet mental health needs, domestic violence and housing," she said.

It remains unclear whether such services would — or even could — have prevented the tragedy in Chelsea. Lawmakers have called for an investigation into the case and how DHHS handled it following statements from the victims' relatives and reporting from the Press Herald and Morning Sentinel.

That investigation will only begin once the teen's criminal case is concluded, according to Peter Schleck, who heads the state's Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability.

Assistant Attorney General Katie Sibley, who's prosecuting the case, said it will likely take at least a month for the judge to decide whether the teen will be tried as a juvenile or an adult. A potential trial could take months or even years.

The boy has been held at Long Creek Youth Development Center in South Portland since the killings nearly a year ago. If he's tried as an adult and found guilty of murder, the charge will carry a minimum sentence of 25 years in prison.

Juveniles, on the other hand, can only be detained until their 21st birthday, even if they've been convicted of the most serious crimes. In 2023, a Maine teenager found guilty of murdering his girlfriend was sentenced to a fraction of the time he would have served had he been tried as an adult.

Dylan Tusinski — 207-861-9254
dtusinski@pressherald.com



Last month in Augusta, defense attorney Kurt Peterson speaks at a bind-over hearing for a teenager charged with killing two men in 2025 in Chelsea. The hearing, a court proceeding to determine whether he will be tried as an adult, lasted three days as relatives, caseworkers and attorneys presented facts about the boy's early life.