

BRENDAN P. MURPHY
CHILD ABUSE AND JUVENILE
TRIAL TEAM LEADER

AMY M. QUEEN
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
TRIAL TEAM LEADER

SHANNON L. SULLIVAN
GENERAL TRIAL TEAM LEADER

DAVID R. WILSON
COMPLEX FELONY
TRIAL TEAM LEADER

MATTHEW D. KEMMY
KATIE A. SUVER
MAJOR CASE CHIEFS

PAIGE E. CLARKSON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



MARION COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
P.O. BOX 14500, 555 COURT ST NE
SALEM, OREGON 97309

CONCETTA F. SCHWESINGER
SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT
TRIAL TEAM LEADER

DAWN THOMPSON
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
MANAGER

PAMI GUERRA
VICTIM ASSISTANCE MANAGER

ROBERT ANDERSON
CHIEF MEDICAL LEGAL DEATH
INVESTIGATOR

Notice Regarding Recent Governor Brown's Commutation of Convicted Aggravated Murder:

Marion County Sheriff Joe Kast and the Marion County District Attorney Paige Clarkson have significant safety concerns surrounding the sudden and ill-planned Governor's commutation of convicted Aggravated Murderer from Douglas County, Kyle Hedquist (45 years old), into the Salem Community.

Background:

Hedquist was convicted of the **Aggravated Murder** of a teenage foster child, Nikki Thrasher, in Douglas County in 1995. Following the burglary of his aunt's home, Hedquist possessed numerous stolen items including electronics and firearms and hid them in the home of a co-defendant. While visiting that same home, victim Thrasher innocently asked about the property, having no knowledge that they were the evidence of Hedquist's prior crime. In a pre-meditated plan to protect himself from possible reports to law enforcement, Hedquist tricked the victim into driving him to a rural Douglas County location where he shot the victim execution-style in the back of the head and dumped her body along the road. Hedquist admitted killing her to eliminate a witness in hope of preventing his own capture.

Hedquist was convicted of the Aggravated Murder of Nikki Thrasher and sentenced to **Life Without the Possibility of Parole.**

Hedquist was also sentenced to **Robbery in the First Degree** and **3 Counts of Kidnapping in the Second Degree** for a separate incident in which he robbed a local Pizza Hut at gunpoint, taking approximately \$3000. For those crimes he received 60 months and 20 months respectively in prison.

Clemency:

Despite these horrific facts and his violent history, and over the objection of the Douglas County DA whose office originally handled the prosecution¹, Governor Brown granted clemency to Hedquist, thereby granting his release. On March 22, 2022, Marion County Community Corrections was notified by the Department of Corrections (DOC) that Hedquist, who was housed at the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, was seeking release into Marion County due to "community concerns" related to any Douglas County residence.²

¹ See Douglas County DA Richard Wesenberg's letter to the governor by clicking the link.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11pWovNWifRP1N-QKq8pB4ytad4E7ZJyj/view?usp=sharing>

² No details of these concerns were noted, though the only other possible Douglas County address provided was that of Hedquist's aunt who was the Burglary victim in his prior offenses. This was determined inappropriate as he is not allowed contact with her and she possessed unsecured firearms in her residence.

On April 13, 2022, Marion County Community Corrections completed a field investigation to determine the appropriateness of the local address and denied it based upon the fact the owner had never met Hedquist, and only spoken to him on the phone.³ DOC responded by informing Marion County Community Corrections that the Governor's Office had provided a new possible address in Salem. Community Corrections requested additional time to conduct yet another field investigation to determine the appropriateness of this new address. DOC requested this investigation be completed by April 15, 2022 which was an unrealistic timeline for Community Corrections.⁴ Despite Community Corrections safety-based objections and further request to release Hedquist to his home county of Douglas, we were notified by the Parole Board on April 15, 2022 that Hedquist would nonetheless be released to the South Salem address as provided by the Governor's office. He was released at noon that day.

Hedquist is now living at a Salem address with a former prison chaplain. He has been provided with standard conditions of supervision and has been placed on GPS monitoring. District Attorney Paige Clarkson stated, "This case represents a shocking lack of concern by the Governor's Office for the safety of our community, disregard for the transparency of any process and apathy toward the normal safety protocols for such an obvious risk. A Judge in an entirely different part of the state determined that this offender should never be out of prison and yet he is now living in our county without the proper safety assurances. Our community deserves better than what our state leadership foisted upon us here."

Sheriff Joe Kast stated, "It is appropriate that our community be made aware of this individual and potential safety risks he may cause. I have every confidence that my office and our Community Corrections professionals will do their best to appropriately manage his reintegration into society, despite our objections and the obvious shortcomings the State's process presented." Marion County remains committed to public safety and ensuring our residents feel safe and protected. While we are frustrated with Governor Brown's decision to commute Kyle Hedquist and relocate him to Marion County, we will continue to put the needs of our community first. The commissioners said "we have some of the finest people working in our sheriff and district attorney's offices, they show up every day to put the needs of Marion County before anything else. Governor Brown has just made their jobs harder."

³ Hedquist has no family or other significant ties to our community. His only connection is a job located in Salem.

⁴ There are clearly defined protocols for adults releasing from DOC custody, to include conducting thorough field investigations by the receiving county to ensure community placements are acceptable, not only for the AIC, but also for our community. Considering the severity of the crime, and the potential risk our county would assume if we accepted this case, the short timeframe provided to conduct a thorough field investigation was unreasonable.