

## **Cincinnati Enquirer: Mom of 3 charged with child endangerment**

*By Jennifer Baker  
September 9, 2009*

ST. BERNARD – The mother of three small children was arrested and charged Tuesday after they were found living in deplorable living conditions at a residence in the 4400 block of Greenlee Avenue, St. Bernard police said.

Brooke Watts, 22, is held today at the Hamilton County jail on three counts of child endangering.

Her children, ages 1, 4 and 7, were placed in the custody of Hamilton County's children services agency, according to St. Bernard police.

## **WKRC-TV (Cincinnati): Saint Bernard Children Found in Deplorable Conditions**

*September 9, 2009*

Brooke Watts A Saint Bernard mother was in court today on charges her three young children were living in deplorable conditions. 27 year old Brooke Watts was arraigned this morning on three counts of child endangerment.

According to the police report, Children's Services called officers to Watts' apartment on Greenlee, where she was living with her children ages one, four and seven. Officers say they found pills, bottles and other items which are commonly used in making meth. They say the apartment also contained spoiled, bug-infested food, bugs and prescription drugson the floor. Social workers say the children had lice and bug bites.

Watts was given a \$3000 bond. The children were released to Children's Services.

Watts has a past record including three counts of theft. In one case, one of her children was present while she was stealing-she served probation and took parenting classes as part of her sentence.

## **Columbus Dispatch: Baby abandoned at birth is eligible for adoption**

*By Dana Wilson*

*September 11, 2009*

DELAWARE, Ohio -- A baby boy abandoned three months ago in Delaware County is now eligible for adoption.

Delaware County Juvenile Court Judge Kenneth J. Spicer yesterday granted permanent custody of Thomas Benjamin Lewis to the county Job and Family Services Department.

Spicer determined that Thomas was abandoned because his parents did not come forward in the more than 90 days that the baby has been in the county's temporary custody.

On June 9, a passing motorist found the newborn lying in grass along Owenfield Drive in Lewis Center. The baby was left within sight of a Meijer store off Rt. 23 and across the street from a KinderCare. He was naked, and his umbilical cord was still attached.

The baby was put in "serious danger," Assistant County Prosecutor Katheryn L. Munger wrote in an Aug. 11 motion to the court. "It was lucky that he was found and received medical care immediately, or the result could have been tragic."

Thomas is doing well in foster care but deserves a permanent home, Munger told the judge yesterday. "We'd like the baby to be adopted," she said.

Casey Clark, the court-appointed guardian ad litem representing the baby's interests, agreed that granting permanent custody was appropriate.

"We don't have any other options," Clark said.

Meanwhile, the Delaware County sheriff's office is awaiting the results of a DNA test that was submitted to the state crime lab last week. The office submitted a DNA sample from a potential mother to the Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigation.

If a positive match is found and the baby's parents were to seek custody, the court's permanent-custody order could be appealed, Munger said.

An appeal must be filed within 30 days, so officials will wait another month before placing the boy in an adoptive home, said Mona Reilly, director of Delaware County Job and Family Services. For now, Thomas will remain in foster care.

## **WCMH-TV (Columbus): Doctors: Economy May Be Behind Increase In Child Abuse Cases**

*By Tom Brockman*

*September 10, 2009*

COLUMBUS, Ohio —According to the non-profit organization, Childhelp, nearly five children die in the United States each day from child abuse. Now, local doctors say they're seeing more cases of child abuse and it could all boil down to the struggling economy.

"I think it's alarming," says Doctor Philip Scribano. He's the medical director of the Center of Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital and he says the number of child abuse cases is

skyrocketing.

He says at the hospital from 2007 to 2008, overall abuse cases increased by 26 percent, child abuse head traumas increased from 24 cases to 43 and fatal cases increased from five in 2006 and 2007 to twelve in 2008.

"In 2008, we only had an eight percent increase in our total number of admissions from trauma compared to a 26 percent increase in abuse cases, and in 2009, a 15 percent increase in abuse cases with a decline in the number of trauma admissions year to date," says Scribano.

He suspects the slumping economy may have something to do with it; specifically added stress in the home combined with a decline in abuse prevention services.

So could there be a link between a struggling economy and child abuse, Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus is teaming up with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh to determine just that. "We're looking at this in the context of the economic environment during these years and whether we're able to ascribe an economic impact to one specific type of abuse inflicted, brain injury," he says.

So what can be done? Locally, he urges people to report suspected cases of child abuse to children's services. Federally, he says prevention programs such as home visiting services should be expanded.