

A blooming winter

Amaryllis bulbs coated in wax don't need soil or water.

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High-stakes battle

UMD men top St. Cloud State in top five matchup..

in Sports, Page B1



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'She's the hero'



Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald holds a picture of Jake Thomas Patterson, the suspect in the kidnapping of Jayme Closs and the murder of her parents, during a press conference on Friday.

Rescuers, law enforcement recount finding Closs alive

By Peter Passi, Brady Slater and Maria Lockwood news@duluthnews.com

Gordon, Wis. Jeanne Nutter neared the end of a walk with her dog Thursday when she saw a young woman approaching her on the road outside Gordon, Wis. The girl wore no coat, a baggy sweatshirt and what looked like slippers but were quickly judged to be shoes too big for the girl's feet. Alone visiting her nearby cabin, Nutter, 66, instinctively sensed trouble and that the girl had left somewhere in a hurry. A retired child protection social worker with the state of Wisconsin, Nutter swung into protection mode as she heard Closs say she was lost and needed help. "She looked at me and said, 'I'm Jayme Closs,' and I knew who she was immediately from the pictures of her," Nutter told the News Tribune on Friday via phone from her cabin — less than 24 hours after the missing Closs had been



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Smith Jayme Closs is pictured with her aunt Jennifer Smith (left) after being rescued from Gordon, Wis.

recovered. "I knew immediately I needed to get her to a safe place. And I knew it wasn't my place." The Nutter cabin is an A-frame facing away from the road and shut off from the rest of the circuitous community along South Eau Claire Acres Circle, where two doors to the west of the Nutters

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Photo courtesy of Nutter family Jeanne Nutter poses with her dog, HenryStandingBear, during a visit to their cabin in Douglas County. Nutter was the first person to encounter Jayme Closs during her recovery on Thursday after she'd been missing since Oct. 15 — the day her parents were slain in the family's Barron, Wis., home.

Sheriff: Closs was 'targeted' by suspect, 21

By Tom Olsen tolsen@duluthnews.com

Barron, Wis. Authorities believe a 21-year-old Gordon man "targeted" 13-year-old Jayme Closs, killing her parents in her presence, abducting her and keeping her captive for nearly three months. Law enforcement officials announced Friday that Jake Thomas Patterson was being held as a suspect in the Oct. 15 shooting deaths of Denise and James Closs and the kidnapping of Jayme. She was located safely Thursday after fleeing from the remote Gordon home where she was being held. "In cases like this we often need a big break," said Justin Tolomeo, special agent in charge of the Milwaukee FBI. "It was Jayme herself who gave us that break." By late Friday, Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald confirmed

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The next challenge for Jayme: Recovery

Recovery from three-month ordeal will be difficult, mental health experts say

By John Lundy jlundy@duluthnews.com Jayme Closs will face an extended, difficult challenge as she recovers from a horrifying three-month ordeal, mental health experts say. "She's not only been through the terrible horror of losing her parents but by such a tragic means," said Heather Rose-Carlson, a psychologist at Northland Psychological Services who specializes in critical incidents. "To also being kidnapped, and we don't know what other experiences she's had over the last three months. So her life as she knows it is completely changed." The effect can vary from person to person, said Saprina Matheny, a clinical social worker for the Human Development Center who specializes in trauma.

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# PATTERSON

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that Jayme had been released from observation at a Twin Ports hospital and reunited with an aunt. She was expected to be home later that night. “She is doing as well as circumstances allow,” Fitzgerald said, declining more specific comment on her condition and her treatment since October. Patterson was being held in the Barron County Jail on three preliminary charges: two counts of first-degree intentional homicide and one count of kidnapping. He is expected to be arraigned in Barron County Circuit Court on those charges at 3:30 p.m. Monday. Douglas County Sheriff Tom Dalbec confirmed that a woman walking her dog first encountered Jayme, who had managed to escape from a residence in Eau Claire Acres. He said the woman brought her to a neighboring residence and they called 911.

Within minutes, deputies located a vehicle matching a description given by Jayme, Dalbec said. They made a traffic stop, arresting Patterson without incident. Fitzgerald said a reunification plan was in place before she was discovered, allowing her to begin speaking with investigators after undergoing medical and mental health screenings. Investigators also have recovered a shotgun consistent with the one used to kill Jayme’s parents, James and Denise, the sheriff said. He added that it has yet to be conclusively identified as the murder weapon.

Fitzgerald disclosed that a shotgun also had been used to blow up the locks on the Closs’ family home on Oct. 15. The sheriff said investigators have not been able to establish any relationship between the Closs family and Patterson, but they believe Jayme’s abduction was the goal of the crimes.

**Suspect investigated**  
The only known connection at this time between the Closs family and Patterson is tenuous at best. Steve Lykken, president at Jennie-O Turkey Store in Barron, said James and Denise Closs worked together at the plant for 27 years. Their employment very briefly overlapped with Patterson’s, as Lykken confirmed: “Nearly three years ago, Jake Patterson was hired one day but quit



Steve Kuchera / skuchera@duluthnews.com  
Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald briefs the media at the Barron County Courthouse Friday morning.

the next, citing that he was moving from the area. He has not been employed with Jennie-O since then.”

Acknowledging Patterson’s brief employment, Fitzgerald confirmed there was no evidence of the suspect ever interacting with the Closs family, in person or electronically.

Patterson’s motivations remain a mystery, but Fitzgerald said his intent appears clear.

“The subject planned his actions and took many proactive steps to hide his identity from law enforcement and the general public,” he said, noting Patterson had shaved his head to avoid leaving hair, among other apparent precautions.

Officials said Patterson is a Gordon resident and was not employed. He has no criminal record, according to law enforcement and a search of Wisconsin and Minnesota databases. Authorities were questioning Patterson and executing search warrants, Fitzgerald added, with about 30 or 40 members of law enforcement remaining at his home Friday afternoon, combing through every room for evidence.

Jean Serum, superintendent of Northwood School in Minong, described Patterson as “a quiet kid and a good student.” He was a member of the school’s quiz bowl team, an activity she characterized as “sort of a battle of the

brainiacs.” Patterson graduated from Northwood in May 2015.

Serum said she was surprised to hear of Patterson’s alleged role in abducting Jayme.

“We don’t know what happened,” she said, noting that everyone is still waiting for answers.

“We’re just so thankful Jayme was found alive. We’re happy for the Barron School and the Barron community,” Serum said.

Kristin Kasinskas, who made the 911 call when Jayme was found, is a teacher at Northwood. Kasinskas told the Chicago Tribune on Friday that she taught Patterson science in middle school. “He seemed like a quiet kid,” she said. “I don’t recall anything that would have explained this, by any means.”

Barron County District Attorney Brian Wright said his job in prosecuting the case is “to obtain justice for Jayme, Denise and James Closs.”

“It was only a few months ago that we as a community gathered to pray for Jayme’s safe return at Barron High School,” he said. “God has answered those prayers.”

## Jayme’s escape

A log of law enforcement activities in Douglas County shows that the 911 call first came in at 4:17 p.m. after Jayme approached Jeanne Nutter. She told Nutter that she was Jayme Closs, that “Jake Patterson had killed her

Essentia Health–St. Mary’s hospital in Superior, according to the call log.

Fitzgerald said investigators have established that Patterson was not home when Jayme approached Nutter for help. He said they believe Patterson may have been out searching for her at the time of his arrest.

The sheriff said he did not know if and how Jayme was restrained in the residence or how she escaped.

## Residents relieved

Throughout the city of Barron — population 3,423 — stores, restaurants, churches and government buildings displayed signs with messages such as “Welcome Home Jayme” and “Prayers Answered!”

Kimberly Cook, owner of His and Her Hair Studio, was ecstatic to hear Jayme was coming home. She had known the Closs family six or seven years, having worshiped together at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in nearby Cameron, and was particularly close with Denise Closs.

“They were wonderful, wonderful people,” she said. “They always wanted to help with anything.”

Cook said she “got chills” when she heard the news Thursday night. Jayme, who was

always quiet, proved to be a “brave, strong little girl,” she said.

“It’s absolutely amazing,” Cook said. “It’s unbelievable. She saved herself.”

Melodee Eckerman of Cameron attended Friday morning’s news conference so she could hear the good news of Jayme’s survival and escape firsthand.

“I’m like everyone else,” Eckerman said. “I’ve been praying every day since day one, and I don’t even know her.”

Barron Area School District Superintendent Diane Tremblay said the school had on-site psychologists and therapy dogs available to fellow students, as well as additional officers staffing the school.

She called Jayme “an extraordinary young lady” for having the courage to find her way home.

“It has been 88 days of hope for her safe return,” Tremblay said. “Eighty-eight days of prayers for Jayme, her family, friends, our students, staff and community. Eighty-eight days of holding on to the faith that our authorities would never give up, and they certainly did not. Finally, 88 days of our close-knit community with the same goal in mind: to bring Jayme home and back into our arms.”

News Tribune reporter Peter Passi contributed to this story.

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