



Andrew A. Bain
STATE ATTORNEY
NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
ORANGE AND OSCEOLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA

M. Ryan Williams
CHIEF ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY

Jamie McManus
DEPUTY CHIEF ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY

Kamilah Perry
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GENERAL COUNSEL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2024

Contact:

Public Information Office
415 N. Orange Ave
Orlando, Fla. 32801
PIO@sao9.org
SAO9th.com

Stephan Sterns Indicted for First Degree Murder of Madeline Soto

OSCEOLA COUNTY, Fla. – On Wednesday, an Osceola County grand jury indicted Stephan Sterns on First Degree Murder in the death of 13-year-old Madeline Soto.

On Feb. 26, Soto’s mother reported the teen missing to the Orange County Sheriff’s Office after she never showed up for school. During the investigation into the teen’s disappearance, law enforcement found several disturbing pictures and videos on Stephan Stern's cell phone. Sterns is the boyfriend of the victim's mother. After the discovery, Kissimmee Police arrested Sterns on Feb. 28 and he is now facing 60 charges including Capital Sexual Battery, Lewd or Lascivious Molestation and Unlawful Possession of Materials Depicting Sexual Performance by a Child. He has been in jail on no bond since his arrest.

Soto’s body was found March 1 in a wooded area in Osceola County, four days after she disappeared. Sterns became a suspect in her homicide and a grand jury indicted him on First Degree Murder after the case was presented to a grand jury.

State Attorney Andrew Bain released the following statement:

“Building a strong criminal case requires working closely with law enforcement and our office began working with deputies and Kissimmee Police in the very early stages of this investigation. Over the past nearly eight weeks, we have collaborated with our law enforcement partners to collect and review a tremendous amount of evidence and information.

“Extensive death investigations can typically take six weeks or longer but because of the solid policework and work of the prosecutors assigned to the case, we were successful in presenting this case to the grand jury in a relatively short time and securing a First Degree Murder indictment. Madeline deserves justice and our office will do everything legally possible to ensure the defendant is held accountable for his actions and the community and Madeline’s family receive closure.”

"This indictment signifies a crucial step forward in our quest for justice and a testament to our commitment to honoring Madeline’s memory," Kissimmee Police Department Chief Betty Holland stated.

The defendant will have an initial appearance scheduled then his case will proceed through the criminal justice system. Please check the Osceola County Clerk of Court's website for the latest update on court hearings.

We understand the public interest in this case but are unable to release additional information to protect the integrity of the case.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

###