Girl, 12, and boyfriend charged in triple slaying

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**BY GLOBAL NATIONAL**APRIL 25, 2006

MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA -- Monday began with elementary school students holding hands and praying for their third grade classmate slain with his parents.

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The city of Medicine Hat is still reeling with the triple slaying of a family discovered Sunday -- a 41-year-old man, his wife, and his son.

The family home was turned into a gruesome crime scene Sunday afternoon, when a neighbourhood playmate of the son came to call on his friend -- but instead saw a body through the window.

Hours later, Canada-wide warrants were issued for the Grade 7 girl and Jeremy Allan Steinke, who is known to police in Medicine Hat.

The runaway pair was arrested by Leader, Sask., RCMP on Monday at 8 a.m. They were held in Swift Current and had a bail hearing the same day.

They were transferred to Medicine Hat on Monday night and made their first court appearance Tuesday.

The triple homicide has devastated the 41-year-old man's father, who says his son was ready to start his own repair business after buying a white truck just days ago; the truck still sits in the family driveway with the driver's side window smashed out.

"He was so happy. He was just starting out," said the man's father.

The father said his son used to work for EnCana and was very handy and skilled in multiple trades. He was a talented mechanic and welder, but he also used to spend his time cruising yard sales for computers he could take home and repair.

"He had lots of friends; he was very loved," he added. "He was a very easygoing guy."

The man's wife, a stay-at-home mom, signed up for a course on small businesses a couple months ago, and was hoping to start up her own company, but "she never had the chance."

He remembers his young grandson from a visit to Medicine Hat two years ago.

"He was bubbly. He was always trying something; he always had a big smile," he said."It's not easy."

The triple slaying has also been hard on the neighbours, mainly parents and seniors.

Phylis Gehring has lived on the corner of the well-manicured Cameron Road for 20 years.

The family had moved-in next door during September 2003 from Okotoks, where they had lived for five years before that.

By Sunday afternoon, her neighbours' home was surrounded by police cars, sniffer dogs and yellow crime scene tape.

The sounds of the family's young son playing hockey in his backyard bright and early before walking down the road to school were frequent.

"We were forever picking up balls from our yard. This is what really hurts; we won't be doing that anymore," she said.

"I'm going to miss that terribly."

Most of the residents up and down the block knew the family to wave hello to.

"You wonder, why this family? A kid's life taken away from him for what?" Gehring asked. "All I know is that they're gone. It's going to be very, very different around here."

As the seventh grader was being charged with first-degree murder, her St. Mary's School junior high friends were heading to class.

"I'm feeling really sad, she's one of my closest friends," said a classmate.

The 12-year-old, who cannot be named under terms of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, is a good student, she said, earning marks in the 80s and above.

About a month and a half ago, the pre-teen started to change, she said. Her well-scrubbed look turned to goth with dark eyeliner and black nail polish, she said.

That wasn't the only change -- the 12-year-old began dating a 23-year-old man who drove around town in a pickup truck.

"All I want is her back."

The classmate's mother, Jody, says rumours of the 12-year-old girl and the grown man courting on the Internet terrify her.

"You talk to your kids and show them movies," Jody said. "The Internet needs to be policed better."

Steinke's parents divorced when he and his sister were young children, said a relative who didn't want to be named.

He stayed with his mother and sister in Medicine Hat while his father, Glenn Steinke, returned to Saskatchewan, where the bulk of the Steinke clan reside.

Twenty-four Steinkes appear in a recent family photo. Jeremy Allan Steinke stands in the back row, third from the left, with dark blondish hair. He's about the height of his father, roughly five foot 10.

Steinke's father declined to comment Monday, as did the 23-year-old's grandparents, who also live in Saskatchewan.

Tips from the public helped lead police to the suspects, said Medicine Hat RCMP Sgt. David Townsend.