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St. Paul / Boyfriend's blow blamed for stroke

Once out of coma, woman tells story

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Pioneer Press

Article Last Updated: 07/16/2008 12:11:15 AM CDT

A St. Paul man with a history of domestic violence hit his 33-year-old girlfriend in the head so hard she suffered a stroke and fell into a coma, authorities said.

Sherri Lang remained on life support for two weeks — then she woke up and told police what had happened, according to a criminal complaint.

By that time, her life had changed, perhaps forever, said her mother, Marylou Law. She remains mostly paralyzed from the neck down and may never again be able to care for a son born 11 days before the assault, Law said.

"I hate him," Law said of Lang's boyfriend. "I have no daughter anymore."

Kevin Dean Young, 36, was charged Monday in Ramsey County District Court with felony domestic assault.

"He's a classic example of exactly what the system should and does focus on: the kind of perpetrator who does it over and over and unfortunately only gets increasingly violent," said Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner. "And that seems to be what's happened here."

The complaint gives this account:

Police were called to a local hospital Saturday to take a report of a June 22 assault in the 1300 block of Winchell Street on St. Paul's East Side.

When they talked to Lang, officers had difficulty understanding her because her speech was so slurred because of the brain injury.

She said Young had gotten angry with her and hit her in the back of the head with his fist. She said he had done that before because an assault there does not leave marks.

The following day, she told Young she didn't feel well. She was sweating, her fingers were numb, and her speech was slurred. Young called 911.

In the hospital, Lang began having seizures. Doctors told her mother she had had a stroke because of the blunt-force trauma to her head.

Police also talked to a friend of Young's who said Young told him he had gotten into a fight with Lang and she had thrown something at him. When she wasn't expecting it, he grabbed her by the hair and punched her, the friend said.

When police interviewed Young, he said he had been with Lang on and off for about five years. He said they had two children together, including the infant.

Young said he was released from the Ramsey County workhouse on June 3 and resumed his relationship with Lang. He was sent to the workhouse after violating probation in a 2007 felony domestic assault case involving another woman, according to court records. The violation was failing to contact his probation officer.

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Young denied any domestic violence between himself and Lang and said she hadn't fallen or struck her head.

Lang, who turned 33 the day of the assault, told Law and other family members about previous abuse by Young, Law said. In the past, after an incident of violence, Young would leave for a couple of days but then return, and Lang would take him back. It was hard for Lang's family to see it happening, Law said.

"Sherri has a problem with being alone," Law said. "She's like the mother type — she would buy his clothing, feed him, take care of him."

Young was being held Tuesday in the Ramsey County jail in lieu of \$20,000 bail. Gaertner said her office is "actively pursuing more medical information to see if higher charges are warranted."

Young was convicted this year of misdemeanor domestic assault. He had domestic violence-related convictions for terroristic threats in 2005 and fifth-degree assault in 2003, according to a 2007 criminal complaint.

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