

Jay father mourns son's murder in Florida, hopes to bring changes to court system

pressherald.com/2023/08/31/jay-father-mourns-sons-murder-in-florida-hopes-to-bring-changes-to-court-system

By Donna M. Perry

August 31, 2023

JAY — Aiden Hutchins was supposed to start fifth grade at Spruce Elementary School on Wednesday.

After living with his mother in Florida over the summer, his father, Nick Hutchins of Jay, was taking primary residential custody of Aiden and moving him back to Maine.

But Aiden never made it back to Maine. He was found dead, along with his half sister, in a home in Florida on Sunday. Their mother, Brandy Hutchins, Nick's ex-wife, had killed them and herself, police said.

"I am never going to be whole again," Nick said Thursday. "I wanted to get him a good education, spend quality time with him and to give him the quality of life he deserved."

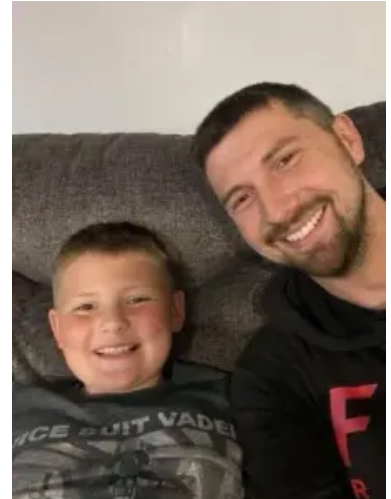
A court ordered Brandy Hutchins, 43, to deliver 10-year-old Aiden to Maine on Aug. 21 so he could start school.

According to the agreement, Nick, 35, was supposed to have primary residence rights for Aiden and shared parental responsibilities.

When Aiden didn't arrive last week, Nick filed an emergency motion with a court, which granted him permission to take custody of his son. Nick said the exchange was supposed to take place at 6 p.m. Friday in Florida. Nick, his father, Bruce Hutchins, and a friend took turns driving to Florida for the 24-hour trip.

The court order said Aiden was to be picked up by a Polk County sheriff's deputy and delivered to Bruce, Bruce said.

When Aiden and the deputy didn't show up at the agreed time Friday, Nick waited the required 30 minutes then called the Polk County Sheriff's Office.



Aiden Hutchins, 10, poses with his father, Nick Hutchins of Jay. The boy and his half sister were killed by their mother, Brandy Hutchins, in Florida last weekend. She was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot, police said. *Hutchins Family photo*

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When deputies couldn't find Aiden, a friend of Nick's suggested he put a post on social media. After 178 shares, someone offered a tip where the children and their mother could be found.

The deputies followed the lead, and on Sunday around 12:30 p.m. officers went to a mobile home in Lake Wales where they found the bodies of Aiden and Brandy's 19-year-old daughter. Brandy was nearby with a self-inflicted fatal gunshot wound.

"She murdered her children and then shot herself," Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said at a news conference Sunday. "I can't imagine a more horrific set of circumstances. My heart breaks for all of the family. We're devastated for this beautiful 10-year-old child, all because mom did not want to turn the child over to his rightful father pursuant to a court order," he said.

The sheriff did not identify Aiden's 19-year-old sister, saying Florida law prevents the police from revealing the names of crime victims.

Nick said Brandy was supposed to be home-schooling Aiden but was not dedicated to it. "She isolated him. She denied me time with him," he said.

Nick, who attended Jay schools, said he moved to Florida in 2006 to attend the Motorcycle Mechanic School. Aiden was born there where the family lived at the time. The couple was married for a very short time, he said.

Nick returned to Maine in 2016, and worked at Central Maine Power Sports in Auburn before taking his current job at Mountainside Power Sports in Wilton.

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Nick said he has been trying to get the parental time-sharing agreement to be enforced since 2016.

The primary residential custody agreement meant Aiden was supposed to live with Nick in Jay and attend school there. Brandy would have visiting rights on school vacations and other times that were set out in an agreement.

Brandy didn't always adhere to their agreement, he said.

Many times he had to get the court to intervene, Bruce said.

Sometimes Nick and Bruce would drive to Florida to pick up Aiden and Brandy wouldn't allow Nick to take him, so he had to get another court order and sometimes go home without Aiden.

"She continuously denied me visitation," Nick said.

"The court system in my eyes did fail," he said. Brandy never gave a good reason to the court why she didn't want to allow him time-sharing with his son, he said.

He said he wants the court to start looking at patterns in the system. The circumstances of Brandy not delivering Aiden on Friday didn't meet the criteria of an Amber Alert, he said.

Nick said he wants his son to have a voice. He wants to make changes to the court system and the Amber Alert system.

"We can honor him and get some changes made," he said.

Michael Oriend, a friend of Nick's, has set up a gofundme fundraising account to help the family. As of Thursday afternoon, \$4,325 was raised toward a \$10,000 goal.

Aiden will be buried in Maine, his father said.

"Aiden's memory needs to live on," his father said.

Portland Press Herald writer Dennis Hoey contributed to this report.

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