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# Opioids' hold on parents takes toll on kids

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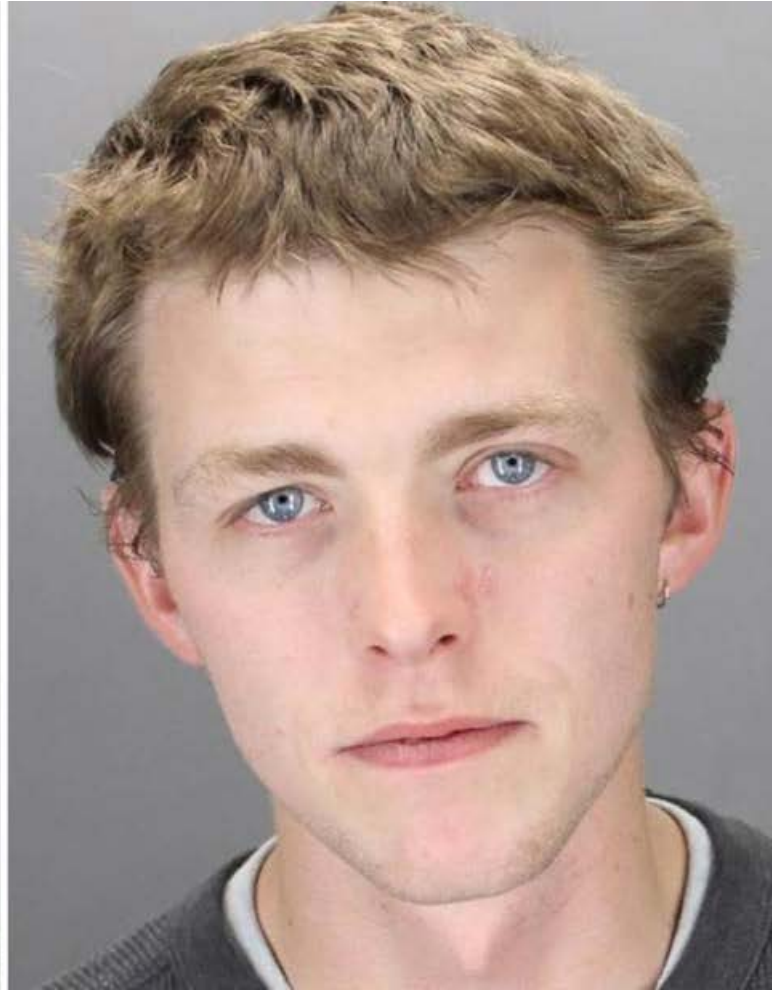
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**Tamara Bruace and Jacob Davis.**

**By Evan Allen**

GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 01, 2016

It was the night after Thanksgiving.

The little boy, not quite 3, wore no socks, despite the cold.



He sat on his unconscious mother's lap in the idling car, a spray of vomit dried on the window, according to the police. His father was slumped on the steering wheel, his seat belt wrapped around his arm like a tourniquet.

In the back seat, the toddler's baby brother slept under a blanket.



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The parents, Tamara Bruce, 33, and Jacob Davis, 27, later told police that they had driven their children more than three hours from Manchester, Vt., to Lawrence to buy heroin and shoot up. When they passed out in a parking lot, another driver thought they were dead and summoned police.

In a wrenching illustration of the toll the opioid crisis is taking on children, Bruce and Davis were each charged with two counts of reckless endangerment to a child in Lawrence District Court earlier this week.

Davis was also charged with operating a car under the influence of drugs.

They were both held on \$2,500 bail.

Bruce's mother, Bonnie, and her husband took custody of the couple's boys, who are 8 months and almost 3 years old.

"This heroin is a demon," Bonnie Bruce said. "It doesn't





only destroy her, it destroys the whole family.”

Bonnie Bruce said she had no idea why her daughter went so far from home to allegedly buy heroin — or why she brought her children.

Davis and Bruce are the latest parents to be accused of using drugs or overdosing in the presence of their children.

In September, video surfaced of a mother overdosing in the toy aisle of a Lawrence dollar store, her toddler daughter wailing and tugging at her arm. In August, a father was found slumped over his steering wheel in Brockton, his young daughters and their dog in the back seat. In April, a man overdosed with an infant in his car in Leominster.

“It’s a very tragic byproduct of the whole opiate crisis, when children are involved,” said a Lawrence police detective, Thomas Cuddy, special assistant to the chief of police. “One case is too many.”

More than half of drug arrests in the city involve out-of-state residents, Cuddy said. The department does not have statistics on how often children witness drug use.

In Lawrence, overdose deaths climbed from six in 2012 to 25 in 2015, according to state statistics. The 2015 number could increase as the medical examiner confirms additional cases.

Statewide for all of 2015, 1,747 people died of confirmed or suspected opioid overdoses, up from 355 in 2000, the statistics show.

In the first nine months of this year, 1,005 people died of overdoses, more than over the same span in 2015.

Bonnie Bruce said her daughter has struggled with addiction for 11 years, with periods of sobriety broken by relapses.

Bonnie Bruce and her husband already had custody of Tamara's oldest child, who is 11 and worries about his younger brothers, she said.

Bruce said she previously had her daughter arrested for stealing from her.

When she was arrested Nov. 25, she was on probation, her mother said.

Police found Tamara Bruce and Davis's car in the parking lot of an AutoZone, and when they knocked hard on the window, the couple awoke, their pupils tiny pinpricks, police wrote in a report.

Davis claimed to be waiting for his brother, but could not keep his story straight, police said.

Their 2-year-old son appeared "very scared," police wrote, and had scratches on his face. Bonnie Bruce said those came from another child in preschool.

Davis eventually admitted to using heroin, police said, and said he had relapsed after staying clean for six months. He dropped to his knees and begged police not to arrest him, police wrote.

He said traveled to Lawrence "all the time" to buy heroin, according to police.

When officers spoke with Tamara Bruce, she kept nodding off, making it difficult for her to hold her child, police wrote.

She told police she had been clean for two years but recently relapsed. She later said she had made a mistake and did not want to lose her children again.

Bonnie Bruce said that when her daughter is not using drugs, she is a good mother with an infectious laugh, just like her father's. But when the drugs take over, she is unrecognizable.

She will always love her daughter and try to help her, Bruce said. But she will not enable her.

"It's gut-wrenching every day. It's sad she's in jail. Tomorrow's her birthday. Christmas is coming," Bruce said.


"I refuse to go bail her out so she could be with us on Christmas. That's hard. But I'm not going to do

her any good by going and getting her. I can't figure it out for her. She's got to make these decisions on her own."

*Matt Rocheleau of the Globe staff and correspondent*

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