

# ADVOCACY

One of the most effective means of arousing public interest is to speak out in your local newspaper. Even though Virginia Dindy moved from Massachusetts several years ago, she was so concerned about the tragedy recorded below that occurred in her old neighborhood that she wrote the following column. Thanks Ginny

## ***State Clears Cops in Hart Death***

*by John P. Kelly, The Patriot Ledger*

July, 2007 QUINCY, MA - The cabana house was surrounded by police. Inside, James Hart sat bleeding from his wrists, determined to die. The 65-year-old, mentally disturbed and suicidal man, had slashed his arms with a kitchen knife and now gave more than a dozen officers who tried to dissuade him an ultimatum: either shoot him, or be stabbed. Then he raised the knife, charged outside, and soon was hovering above an officer who had lost his footing and fallen.

That is what led two Quincy police officers to shoot and kill Hart on July 3, according to accounts by police officers in a collection of reports released to The Patriot Ledger by Norfolk County District Attorney William Keating's office. Keating, who concluded an investigation this week into the killing, determined patrol officers Paul Jackson and William Lanergan Jr. were justified in shooting Hart.

The State Police investigation was based largely on accounts from 18 Quincy police officers, and interviews with Hart's family members, and neighbors who heard or witnessed the shooting. A review of the material, including a 911 call made by Hart's wife, Joan, and police radio communication during the incident, give a detailed look at what transpired just before Hart was shot three times, in the ankle, chest, and, lastly, the head.

"We have a different story than the police," Joan Hart said Friday. The family received the same trove of police reports and is considering a wrongful-death lawsuit. Theresa Hart, 38, the youngest of Hart's five children, said she was scheduled Friday to meet with a lawyer. She said at least two neighbors who witnessed the shooting believe Hart was not carrying a knife when he charged from the cabana.

"There are a lot of things that don't make sense to us," she said.

"We're not out to get innocent police officers in trouble," Theresa Hart said. "We just want to make sure the situation was handled properly."..... ❀

## **Police Should Be Trained in CIT**

By VIRGINIA DINDY, Carefree, Arizona  
Member-NAMI West Valley

As a former Quincy resident, I was shocked and saddened at the recent news that James Hart had died at the hands of the Quincy Police. This man was very ill with severe depression for years and was attempting suicide at the time. His family acted responsibly in calling the police and letting them know the situation.

Where were the properly trained officers to respond to the crisis situation involving a critically mentally ill person?

Have they never heard of the Crisis Intervention Team training that is now available all across the country? Those well-trained officers are trained to diffuse such a situation so no one is hurt. Many lives have been saved over the last few years, including those of police officers.

Hart was critically ill and frantic. He was determined to die, but trained officers, I know, could have calmed the man, and there would have been a very different ending to this tragedy.

We need to end the stigma of mental illness, and open eyes to the fact that mental illness is a disorder of the brain. We know that insurance companies treat mental illness differently than other diseases. You can break a limb or need care for diabetes or heart disease over and over again, but with mental illness, limits are set as to how many visits are allowed. This disease of the brain strikes one in five families in this country. That may mean you.

Urge your police department to take part in CIT training. For more information on brain disorders, or to find out how you can help, call the National Alliance on Mental Illness at 781-938-4048, or visit [www.namimass.org](http://www.namimass.org).

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