

When I heard about a crazy double homicide in my hometown, I rushed to cover it. Between hometown connections, small-town gossip and wild stories, this story was both exciting and disturbing to cover. This story was specifically written and structured for the web/a digital audience.

17-year-old girl arrested for murdering mother and stepfather with shotgun

By Devyn Byers

CARROLL COUNTY, GA- Teenager Sarah Grace Patrick has been charged with the murders of her mother and stepfather in their Carroll County home.

The 17-year-old has been charged for the double homicide that occurred this February, according to [Fox 5](#).

Fox 5 reported that Patrick faces two counts of murder and two counts of aggravated assault.

“When you would talk to her, you never would have thought that such a beautiful, kind soul could do such a thing,” Carroll County teen Kylie Brown said. “Our community is beyond shaken by this news.”

Local rumors could point to possible motive

Carroll County locals believe that they may know Patrick’s motive behind the murders.

Just six days before Patrick’s arrest, 17-year-old [Jackson David Spradlin](#) was arrested in Carroll County for multiple charges.

These charges include the “possession of a firearm or knife during commission of or attempt to commit certain felonies,” according to [The Georgia Gazette](#).

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Many local teens say Patrick and Spradlin were known to be in contact around the time of the February murders.

One Carroll County teen, Katie Brown, described the rumor that has been cycling throughout the small town.

“They were dating, and she asked if he could come over, and they said no,” Katie Brown said. “So, she shot them.”

Katie Brown went on a double date with her boyfriend, her younger sister, Kylie Brown, and Spradlin in late 2023, a little over a year before the murders.

Katie Brown said the young man’s behavior towards her sister was unsettling, leading to the night’s early end.

“By the end of the date, my sister was crying and said she wanted to go home,” Katie Brown said.

Kylie Brown explained that many people are suspicious about the role that Spradlin may have played in the murders, and she personally believes he was involved.

While these rumors remain unconfirmed, this small-town gossip could lead investigators to a possible motive- or an accomplice.

The February murders

On February 20, 36-year-old Kristen Brock and 45-year-old James Brock were found shot to death in their home on Tyus Carrollton Road, according to [WSB-TV Atlanta](#).

There were no signs of forced entry or robbery evident to investigators, [The Exposure](#) stated in a Facebook post.

Patrick contacted the police to report the murders after her younger sister discovered the gunshot victims in their bedroom, according to Fox 5.

“I believe this crime scene to be very sick and twisted,” Kylie Brown said. “Who would’ve thought Sarah Grace Patrick would be the murderer.”

The Exposure claimed that the case went dark in February, beginning nearly five months of intense investigation.

Patrick gives eulogy at victims’ funeral

On March 8, Patrick stood onstage in a blue dress above her parents’ coffins and gave a eulogy between sobs.

Her seemingly heart-felt speech went out to the “very people she’s accused of killing,” as reported by The Exposure.

“No one suspected that the 17-year-old girl who spoke at their funeral could’ve done it,” Kylie Brown said.

Patrick turns herself in

The same person to report the double murder on that cold February night walked into the county jail to close the case Tuesday morning.

Patrick turned herself in nearly five months after calling 911 to report her parents’ deaths, according to Fox 5.

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The Carroll County Sheriff's Office announced Patrick's arrest Tuesday afternoon, as reported by Fox 5.

Fox 5 reported that Patrick is being charged as an adult.

Ongoing case

Carroll County Sheriff's Sgt. Kim Hope said the investigation is still open, claiming that more arrests are possible, according to Fox 5.

The Exposure implied the suspicion that there may be someone who helped plan the murders, cover them or simply knew this horrific event was taking place, yet chose to stay silent.

Fox 5 reported that investigators are still pursuing leads and "monitoring online chatter."

Carroll County law enforcement has yet to rule out the possibility of new developments, according to Fox 5.

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As a student, it was clear to me that mental health has become a debilitating problem for so many college students. I wrote this story to raise awareness about the college mental health crisis and the several reasons so many students feel pressured to their breaking point. It is also specifically written and structured for the web/a digital audience.

University students face record-high surge of mental health struggles

By Devyn Byers

University students are suffering from deteriorating mental health due to overwhelming responsibilities and a debilitating workload.

Between classes, jobs, social life and never-ending deadlines, college students have reached an all-time high of poor mental health and burnout.

One out of every five college students experience serious psychological distress, according to [Best Colleges](#).

Students attribute their declining mental health to stressors such as financial responsibilities, heavy courseloads, and the lack the time to balance it all.

The campus mental health crisis

[Research.com](#) reported that 71% of college students struggle with mental health as of May 2025, and the overwhelming majority claim it is continuously declining.

Nearly 20% of college students struggle with suicidal thoughts and cope through self-harm, according to the [National Library of Medicine](#).

Kayla Walker, a 21-year-old criminal justice student, said her mental health has been on a steady decline since she began college.

“Being an independent student can take a toll when you really only have yourself to rely on,” Walker said. “I often regret coming to college, as I feel like it was the worst mistake of my life mentally.”

The switch from high school to college can also lead to an overwhelming sense of isolation- a leading cause of depression, according to [Everyday Health](#).

Ashley Powell, a 20-year-old elementary education student, claims that her mental health was negatively impacted by her first year of college.

“Since starting college, I’ve definitely felt more independent, which often leads to loneliness,” Powell said. “It was a bad freshman year because everything completely changed.”

Best Colleges reported that 25% of students were diagnosed with depression and 35% were diagnosed with anxiety as of 2024.

Impact on academic performance

A heavy course load combined with external stressors has sent many students into a spiral of burnout.

“I reached a bad point of burnout my first semester of sophomore year due to personal friendship factors and the stress of still having so much more school to do,” Powell said. “It felt overwhelming, and I had no motivation for any of it.”

Some students, such as university sophomore Kahliyah Griffin, feel burdened with an unrealistic standard of perfection in college.

“I placed a lot of pressure on myself to get good grades and also have a social life,” Griffin said. “It was hard trying to find that balance.”

Nearly 85% of students struggling with their course load attribute their mental health struggles to their academic challenges, as reported by Best Colleges.

Walker deeply struggled with academics during her freshmen and sophomore years due to diagnosed mood disorder, an eating disorder and clinical depression.

“I failed seven classes, and my GPA tanked,” Walker said. “I stopped going to work, I began binge eating and my friends were very upset because they felt like I was doing nothing with my life.”

Walker explained that these social pressures only added to her poor academic performance.

Financial stressors

According to [Manhattan Mental Health Counseling](#), approximately 41% of college students feel burdened by their financial responsibilities.

Many students feel that they cannot realistically balance a job and their course load, leading to high amounts of stress.

In an Instagram post by [Suregrad](#), college students reported that the hardest parts of college life include managing tuition fees, loan stress and mental health pressures.

“Finances always stress me out. I feel like I’m behind with having enough money because I’m still a considered a student but expected to act like an adult,” Powell said. “I feel overwhelmed and set back financially because of how expensive it is to actually survive.”

Walker said she is on a constant job search just to “keep afloat” since she is supporting herself through college and paying her own living expenses.

Underdeveloped mental health services

Across the nation, universities recognize the mental struggles their students face and want to support them.

However, these programs are met with various reactions from school to school.

Powell explained that her college’s support system is unbalanced, claiming that increased outreach to younger college students is needed.

“I honestly have felt more supported now that I’m in my program, but during my freshman and sophomore years I felt like I was completely on my own,” Powell said.

Walker also agrees that her college’s mental health services are flawed, and she often doesn’t seek help because of it.

“I often go to the on-campus psychological services but always end up getting a new person, so I have to keep explaining things over and over,” Walker said. “It deters me from going.”

Walker explained that counseling with a consistent therapist would improve her mental health and encourage her to get the support she needs.

Importance of strong support

While some students feel frustrated by their college’s mental health services, others feel seen and uplifted by their institutions.

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Many universities have websites and social media accounts dedicated to helping their students find free mental health support.

Majority of colleges now offer services like free counseling, crisis hotlines, treatment programs, psychiatric screenings and more.

“I do feel supported by my school,” Griffin said. “Having people that want to see you succeed encourages you to want to do better in the future.”

Sufficient mental health services are crucial to support students through the psychological challenges of young adult life and to help them academically prosper, according to the [American College Health Association](#).

Continue to next page for another original story.

I drove to Black Mountain, North Carolina following the destruction of Hurricane Helene. I noticed media outlets limited coverage of the hurricane to its devastation, but I noticed a move of unity despite the tragedy. So, I wrote a story about a small town with a big impact.

ASHEVILLE, N.C.- Hurricane Helene has united the community of North Carolina despite its devastating impacts.

By Devyn Byers

Troops, organizations and countless volunteers work tirelessly to piece back together the damages Helene inflicted upon the North Carolina community.

In the quiet mountains of North Carolina, dozens of Asheville locals lined the roads, holding signs to offer food, clothes and even free hugs to hurricane victims.

Entire homes and businesses were destroyed by the storm, leaving stretches of only dirt and debris. Many North Carolina locals were left with nothing, leaving them to lean on the only help available- their friendly neighbor.

Black Mountain and Asheville, North Carolina were two of the most devastated cities following Helene. North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper claimed there to be over 100 recorded deaths in the area, and at least 92 Asheville citizens were reported as missing.

The Cajun Navy, a nonprofit organization composed of selfless volunteers, travels the country to provide help to those affected by natural disasters. Based in Louisiana, the Cajun Navy has been serving victims of Helene out of the Montreat Reynolds Lodge in Asheville for nearly a month.

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“Disasters happen, and nobody knows why,” Cajun Navy search and rescue volunteer Bethany Comeaux said. “But maybe this is why, because so much good comes out of it in the end.”

The people of Black Mountain and Asheville remain hopeful and resilient. Volunteers of the Cajun Navy have been transporting food, water, clothes, and other crucial supplies to the cities and mountains where people are still unable to leave their homes.

Strangers continue to gather in parking lots, local town squares and relief shelters to support one another. The Helene aftermath has united the people of Asheville and Black Mountain.

“This the way it’s supposed to be,” Cajun Navy founder and CEO Jon Bridgers said. “We’re making a humungous difference.”

Cajun Navy volunteers continue to be courageous and generous to the hurricane victims, along with the rest of the North Carolina community.