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he understood. as part of his plea, Dr. Gowder McKinnon stated that, had agreed to cooperate with

the government's investigation, and the government had agreed that anything he told them would not be used against

him.

McKinnon also said that the defendant had agreed to disclose matters of finance and to forfeit his Georgia medical license. In addition, he would pay a special assessment of \$100.

Sentencing will take place at a later date, following a pre-sentencing investigation by U.S. Probation. Dr. Gowder remains free on bond until his sentence is determined.

McKinnon added that the government would not pursue the other charges against Dr. Gowder, charges which were enumerated in an April 2018 indictment and a January 2019 superseding indictment.

In each of those indictments, Dr. Gowder was charged with one count of illegally obtaining a controlled substance, 45 counts of distributing controlled substances for no medical reason, and seven counts of obtaining controlled substances by fraud or misrepresentation, for a total of 53 federal charges.

Appearing with Dr. Gowder in court that Friday were his wife Lita and attorneys Jeff Brickman of Atlanta and Jeff Wolff of Dahlonega.

"Dr. Gowder is a perfect example of the well-respected and successful doctors who, like many people in this country,

are addicted," Brickman said. "From the get-go, he has accepted full responsibility for poor choices.

"He has continued to express great remorse for his actions. Since his arrest, he has continued to cooperate with the district attorney in Union County and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Dr. Gowder has done a remarkable job addressing his addiction and continues on the road to recovery with the support of his entire family."

As previously reported, David Gowder, along with co-defendants brother Mike Gowder and Dr. James Heaton, pleaded not guilty to federal charges in both the original April 2018 indictment and the January 2019 superseding indictment.

Mike Gowder and Dr. Heaton are still set to appear in federal court for a jury trial that will begin on April 8. Both men are presumed innocent of the charges against them, according to the U.S. District Attorney's Office in Atlanta, "and it will be the government's burden to prove each defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial."

At the time of their alleged crimes, Mike Gowder was the CEO of Union General Hospital and Dr. Heaton ran a family practice clinic in Blairsville.

Dr. David Gowder was the emergency room director at Union General Hospital when he was initially arrested on April 1, 2015, for allegedly attempting to fill fraudulent prescriptions in Fannin County, according to authorities.

Back home in Union County, Dr. Gowder is still facing criminal charges in the state's case brought by Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley.

In April 2017, Langley presented evidence to a Union County Grand Jury that resulted in Dr. Gowder being indicted on four counts of forgery and more than 60 counts involving fraud in obtaining controlled substances, as well as the unauthorized dispensing of narcotic medication.

"We will not make a determination upon what we are going to do with his state charges until he is sentenced in the federal system, and then I will consider whether or not that sentence is adequate," Langley said following Dr. Gowder's guilty plea.

Motions filed last year by the separate legal teams of Mike Gowder and Heaton to sever each other as co-defendants so that they may be tried separately were still outstanding at press time.

Alleged murderer Fults succumbs to self-inflicted gunshot wound

By Shawn Jarrard
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Joshua Lee Fults, the alleged murderer of Amber Jackson and her 3-year-old son Ethan, died from a week-old self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head on Tuesday, March 12, according to Fannin County Coroner Becky Callihan.

Fults, 35, of Morganton, was pronounced dead at 6:44 a.m. that Tuesday, said Callihan.

"Prayers are needed on both sides," said Callihan.

Fults had been charged with Jackson's March 4 murder, and additional charges were



Joshua Lee Fults

expected prior to his death, including a charge for the murder of Ethan Jackson, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Jackson, 31, and her

young son Ethan were discovered shot to death on the front steps of the Underwood Road apartment they shared with Fults in Morganton, according to the GBI.

Fults, identified as Jackson's boyfriend by authorities, "was located on the porch of the residence suffering from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound" that same March 4 evening, according to the GBI.

The tragedy of the situation is underscored even further by reports that authorities, as few as six and eight months prior to the March 4 shootings, had responded to at least two previous 911 calls by Jackson concerning Fults' suicidal and violent behavior, according to the Fannin County Sheriff's Office.

UCSO ...

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said Osborn. "The gate had been damaged, because it was a secure storage facility, but the great thing about this storage unit, it had video cameras. Staff Sgt. Lamar Dyer worked this case, and he was able to gather video evidence, even though the suspects went in there and damaged at least six of the 32 cameras.

"But we were still able to get enough video evidence from these cameras to send pictures out to neighboring agencies, which is something we always do. We had a picture of the vehicle, a red Chevy Tahoe, and it had significant stickers on the back and side windows. Clay County (North Carolina) investigators recognized the vehicle and the suspects."

Thanks to such inter-agency cooperation, the Sheriff's Office was able to crack the case within days of the crime, and when Dyer got Davis Jr. in for questioning, he essentially admitted to the whole thing, according to Lt. Osborn.

Davis Jr. was indicted by a Union County Grand Jury in July 2018, and resulting from his trial, which wrapped up on March 6, 2019, he was found guilty of all charges. He now awaits sentencing in the Union County Jail.

Once again, Osborn said he was happy with the relationships the Union County Sheriff's Office has formed with fellow law enforcers, including the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office.

Indicted alongside Davis Jr. in 2018 was Christopher Michael Rhodes, who is facing all the same charges as an accomplice in the crime, according to court documents.

Rhodes is currently incarcerated in North Carolina, and once he gets out of prison, he'll be transferred to Union County to answer to the charges against him, according to Osborn.

UC Historical Society Scholarship

The Union County Historical Society is once again giving a scholarship to a graduating senior.

If your child is a graduating senior at Union County High School or the Woody Gap School and wishes to apply for this scholarship, the application will be available on March 13, 2019 in the counselor's office. The application must be completed and returned to the counselor's office no later than March 29, 2019. N(Mar20 Z20)CA