

NEWS RELEASE

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DA's Homicide Team convicts 6 defendants in homicide cases

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Homicide Team convicted six defendants today in Mecklenburg County Superior Court. The defendants entered their guilty pleas in courtroom 5350 before The Honorable Richard D. Boner, Superior Court Judge. Another defendant who previously pled guilty was also sentenced today.

Russell Austin, 18, pled guilty to 1) second-degree murder, 2) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and 3) robbery with a dangerous weapon for the murder of Jamie Rea, 27. Austin was sentenced to a total of 267-339 months in prison. In November 2011, Austin fatally shot Mr. Rea at the Econo Lodge hotel on East Independence Boulevard as he tried to rob Mr. Rea.

Jacob Kost, 24, pled guilty to 1) aggravated felony death by motor vehicle and 2) driving while impaired in connection with the June 2012 death of Kevin Andrew Sweet, 22. Kost was sentenced to 72-99 months in prison for the death by vehicle offense; by law, he cannot also be sentenced for driving while impaired. Judge Boner also ordered that Kost's driving privileges be revoked for 84 months. Charges against a co-defendant in the case are still pending.

Stefano Jett, 22, pled guilty to 1) involuntary manslaughter and 2) felony hit and run for the death of John Hazel Evans, 45. Jett was sentenced to a total of 32-58 months in prison. In September 2012, Mr. Evans was in the parking lot of a gas station on West Sugar Creek Road in Charlotte when an argument started between two other people. Mr. Evans was trying to break up the fight when Jett drove into the parking lot and intervened. As he was leaving, Jett struck Mr. Evans with his car. Mr. Evans was taken to an area hospital, where he died as a result of his injuries three days later. The car was later found partially submerged in a pond.

James Bernard Nash, 66, pled guilty to felony death by motor vehicle for the death of Michael Dennis Case, 53. Nash was sentenced to 51-74 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending the successful completion of 36 months of supervised probation. As conditions of his probation, Nash must serve 60 days in the Mecklenburg County jail and pay restitution to the victim's family. Judge Boner also ordered that Nash cannot drive and cannot consume or possess alcohol during his probation. In the early morning hours of December 7, 2012, Mr. Case was walking his dog across Prosperity Church Road in Charlotte when he was struck by a vehicle driven by Nash. Mr. Case died at the scene, and his dog died later. Nash stayed at the scene and called 911. A blood analysis determined that Nash's blood alcohol content was .13.

Dontae Torrence, 20, pled guilty to possession with intent to sell or deliver marijuana in connection with the January 2013 incident that resulted in the murder of Benjamin McDaniel,

19, and the shooting of another man. Torrence was sentenced to 5-15 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation. Charges are still pending against a co-defendant in the case.

Dominick Cole, 28, pled guilty to two counts of accessory after the fact to first-degree murder in connection with the November 2011 murders of Floriberto Acahua-Itehua, 32, and Benjamin Itehua, 39. Cole will be sentenced at a later date. Charges are still pending against co-defendants in the case.

Campton Wolfe, 26, previously pled guilty to felony possession of marijuana in connection with the murder of Caleb Copenhaver, 20. Today, Wolfe was sentenced to 7-9 months in prison. Judge Boner also ordered that Wolfe pay restitution to the victim's family. In August 2011, a witness and the victim arranged to meet up to purchase marijuana from someone known as "P." When Mr. Copenhaver and the witness arrived at the designated location, they were met by two men identified as [James Andrews](#) and [Cornell Blackwell](#). The witness spoke to "P," who was later identified as Wolfe, on the phone, and he said he was on his way. The witness and Mr. Copenhaver then walked into a vacant house with Andrews and Blackwell, but Mr. Copenhaver decided he wanted to leave. As Mr. Copenhaver walked away, Blackwell pushed him to the ground and shot him. Mr. Copenhaver's wallet was taken, and he died later at an area hospital. Wolfe's co-defendants, Andrews and Blackwell, have previously pled guilty in connection with the murder.

Note: Almost all guilty pleas entered in criminal administrative court are the result of an agreed upon plea arrangement between the State and the defendant, which is then approved by the sentencing judge. For more information about why most cases must be resolved by plea negotiation instead of jury trial, please visit the "Understanding Criminal Court" section of the DA's website at www.charmeckda.com.

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