

NEWS RELEASE

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Juries convict 2 impaired drivers; habitual DWI driver pleads guilty

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Misdemeanor Appeals Team convicted two defendants at trial during the week of July 7, 2014. Six other defendants were convicted when they pled guilty or remanded their cases to District Court for sentencing. The proceedings were held in courtroom 5170 before The Honorable W. David Lee, Superior Court Judge. Seven of the eight convicted defendants were convicted of driving while impaired charges.

Scott Kramer, 38, was tried for driving while impaired. The jury returned a verdict of *guilty*. Judge Lee sentenced Kramer to 120 days in the Mecklenburg County jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

Steven Thornton, 50, was tried for driving while impaired. The jury found him *guilty*. Judge Lee sentenced Thornton to 60 days in the Mecklenburg County jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation. As a condition of his probation, Thornton must serve 1 day in jail.

Among those who were convicted when they pled guilty or remanded their cases were:

Dena Ammons, 47, pled guilty to habitual impaired driving. Judge Lee sentenced Ammons to 12-24 months in prison.

Yaameen Goodson, 31, pled guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Lee sentenced Goodson to 12 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation. As conditions of his probation, Goodson must serve 10 days in the Mecklenburg County jail and wear a continuous alcohol monitor for 120 days.

Note: Misdemeanors and infractions are originally prosecuted in district court in North Carolina. In criminal district court, a judge determines guilt, not a jury; this is commonly referred to as a "bench trial." However, defendants have a right to appeal a conviction from the district court to the superior court for a trial de novo. The new trial in superior court must be a jury trial, not a bench trial. In a de novo trial, the jury cannot be informed that a district court judge previously found the defendant guilty; further, a record of any evidence, including testimony, from district court may not be introduced. While the DA's Office prosecutes nearly 225,000 misdemeanors and infractions each year in district court in Mecklenburg County, each defendant is entitled to exercise his/her right to appeal to the superior court. When a misdemeanor or infraction occupies the limited time available in our superior courtrooms, it the intent of the DA's Office to keep the public informed of the results through news

releases like this one. Due to the volume of misdemeanors and infractions prosecuted in district court each day, reports like this are not possible for all of those cases.

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