

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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Repeat Drunk Driver Sentenced to seven years for Aggravated Vehicular Homicide

(January 20, 2009, Akron) ... Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Dominique Nolen, 24, of Oberlin Street in Akron, was sentenced to seven years for **Aggravated Vehicular Homicide**, a felony of the second degree, and **Operating under the Influence**, an unclassified misdemeanor.

Nolen pled guilty on December 16, 2008 to the charges and was sentenced today by Judge Judith Hunter. Nolen's license was also suspended for life and she was ordered to pay funeral expenses to the family.

Prosecutor Walsh attended the sentencing to support the victim's family and said afterwards, "Billy Owens's life meant so much more than being hit by a drunk driver and left for dead. We are pleased with today's sentence for the Defendant. Ms. Nolen has been through treatment and has had numerous opportunities to learn from drunk driving prior to this tragedy. While prison cannot undue what has been done, it does send the strong message, once again, that drinking and driving is a recipe for disaster and tragedy.

My heart goes out to Mr. Owens' family and I hope that today is one step forward for them as they try to put their lives back together after this tragic loss."

Nolen is the first conviction in Summit County since the change in law requiring repeat drunk drivers to submit to a chemical test. Nolen refused to submit to a breathalyzer test at the Akron Police Department, so she was transported to City Hospital where she was required to submit to a blood draw. The new law, as championed by Prosecutor Walsh, went into effect on September 30, 2008. It requires that repeat drunk driver's who have a previous DUI felony on their record, two DUI convictions in the last six years, or five DUI convictions in the last 20 years, submit to a mandatory chemical test. Nolen had two prior DUI convictions within the last 18 months. The blood draw revealed that Nolen had a whole blood alcohol content of .225. The legal limit for whole blood in Ohio is .08.

On October 17, 2008, Nolen was driving with one passenger when she struck and killed a pedestrian, Billy Owens, 43, of Akron, crossing the street. Nolen was traveling in excess of 50 miles per hour in a marked 25 mile per hour zone. She was also driving without headlights. The victim was walking across the street to a friend's vehicle when he was hit by Nolen. Police reports indicate that the victim was thrown 185 feet due to the impact of the crash. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

Nolen fled the scene but stopped minutes later and called 911, claiming she had been hit by a truck. When police arrived to find Nolen, she and her passenger stated that a third party was driving the vehicle. Police subsequently interviewed the third party only to find that the third party was at work during the occurrence. Nolen later confessed that she was the driver.