

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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Heidi Hoffman pleads guilty to Child Endangering

(July 27, 2009, Akron) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Heidi Hoffman, 27, of Cuyahoga Falls, pled guilty today to Child Endangering, a first-degree misdemeanor. Hoffman was sentenced by Judge Patricia Cosgrove to one year of community control and a suspended jail sentence of six months (Hoffman already served five months in jail after her arrest).

Heidi Hoffman and her husband, Christopher Hoffman, 26, were both charged with murdering their 10-week-old son, Nathan. With further investigation and when Ms. Hoffman passed a lie detector test, prosecutors believed that the evidence proved that Christopher Hoffman was responsible for Nathan's death. However, prosecutors assert that Ms. Hoffman still bears some of the responsibility for failing to protect Nathan before her husband killed him.

Christopher Hoffman was found guilty by a jury of Murder and related charges on June 12, 2009 and was sentenced to life in prison by Judge Patricia Cosgrove with parole eligibility after 20 years.

On December 10, 2007, Nathan Hoffman died in the family's Cuyahoga Falls apartment as a result of asphyxiation from a wadded up facial tissue that was found during the autopsy lodged in the child's oropharynx. His parents, Christopher and Heidi Hoffman, were the only ones home. Christopher Hoffman claimed he was wiping Nathan's mouth with the tissue after a feeding, and Nathan sucked it in and swallowed it. Testimony at trial from Dr. R. Daryl Steiner, Medical Director of the CARE Center at Children's Hospital, was that an infant of 10 weeks was not physically capable of sucking in and swallowing such an object.

At trial, Heidi Hoffman testified for the State that her husband awoke her and told her Nathan was choking on a tissue. She testified that Nathan was struggling to breathe and had a "muffled cry" when she picked him up off the floor where Christopher Hoffman had left him. She tried to pat Nathan's back and remove the tissue. She saw blood in the baby's mouth but could not see any obstruction. Heidi testified that as they called 911, Nathan stopped breathing completely and went limp in her arms.

According to the testimony of paramedics, Nathan was dead when they arrived at the apartment. They tried to revive him but were not successful. Neither paramedics nor doctors at Children's Hospital ever saw an obstruction in the child's throat. It was only upon autopsy that the balled up tissue was found in Nathan's oropharynx. It measured five cm by 2.4 cm. The autopsy also revealed the infant had 23 rib fractures, some recent, some healing and some re-breaks on old healing fractures. Testimony at trial was the old rib fractures were approximately two-to-four weeks old. Christopher Hoffman was the primary caregiver for Nathan during the last four weeks of his life.