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NEWS
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Father gets life sentence for murder of 10-week old son

(Akron) ... Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Christopher Hoffman, 26, of Cuyahoga Falls was sentenced to life in prison by Judge Patricia Cosgrove after being found guilty on June 12, 2009 by a jury of **Murder**, an unspecified felony, Involuntary manslaughter F1, and two counts of felony **Child Endangering**. At sentencing, Judge Patricia Cosgrove added a consecutive five years to the mandatory 15 to life sentence on the Murder charge, making Hoffman not eligible for parole for 20 years.

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Brad Gessner said, "Justice for baby Nathan Hoffman was served today in the form of a conviction for murder. It is horrible that Nathan lived his short life in pain and died at the hands of his father. The State has always disagreed with the defendant's claim that this was an accidental death, and the jury agreed after hearing all the evidence and the expert testimony in the case."

On December 10, 2007, 10-week old 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, 26, 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.

Heidi Hoffman's trial is scheduled for August 18, 2009.