

## **MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH**

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### **Man who murdered mother and son found guilty Faces death penalty**

(July 8, 2010, Akron) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Johnnie Cook, 32, of Akron, was found guilty by a jury today of four counts of Aggravated Murder with a death specification, two counts of Aggravated Robbery, two counts of Aggravated Burglary, Theft, Grand Theft and Theft from the Elderly.

The mitigation and sentencing phase of the hearing will be July 19<sup>th</sup> in Judge Mary Rowlands' court. Death penalty trials consist of two phases: the guilt phase and the sentencing phase. The verdict at the guilty phase requires a unanimous vote in order to move on to the sentencing phase. At the sentencing phase, the defendant may offer mitigating circumstances as to why the death penalty is not the proper sentence. The prosecution can rebut such testimony.

On July 11, 2009, at approximately 4:30 a.m., Alan Grna, 43, and his mother, Julianna Grna, 85, were murdered inside their home on Johnston Street in Akron. Both victims were struck multiple times in the head with a hammer-like object. Alan Grna was killed in the kitchen and Julianna Grna was killed in her bedroom. Cook stole the victims' car, cell phone, jewelry, firearms, and credit cards.

The bodies were not discovered until July 17<sup>th</sup> when a concerned friend contacted the police. Evidence presented at trial included Cook's use of Grna's cell phone and car the evening of the murders. The car was involved in a hit/skip accident. In addition, Cook pawned the victim's jewelry two days after the murder.

DNA evidence discovered on the sink handle and the inside of a toilet paper roll in the victim's bathroom was consistent with Cook trying to clean up after the murders. A witness, Joseph Johnston, told police that he saw the defendant around the time of the murders with blood on his shirt and with the victim's car.

Subsequent to Cook's arrest, Johnston was arrested for an unrelated offense. Three letters were later sent from jail confessing to the murders and signed by Joseph Johnson (last name was misspelled). Prosecutors presented evidence at trial that the letters were actually sent by Cook using Johnston's name.