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PRESS RELEASE

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Chico Woman Plead Guilty to Murder for Hwy 70 DUI that Killed One

A Chico woman plead guilty today in Butte County Superior Court to Second Degree Murder as a result of a car crash while driving under the influence in February 2021.

Nicole Schalles, 36, of Chico was accused of driving her vehicle north on Highway 70 at speeds over 120 mph into the rear of another northbound vehicle on the road. The collision happened on February 4, 2021 at 11:25 p.m. near Lower Honcut Road killing **Dollar Vang, 30, of Olivehurst**.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Vang had been traveling from Olivehurst to work in Oroville when Schalles' vehicle overtook him as she traveled from Marysville back toward Chico. When Schalles hit the rear of Vang's vehicle, it caused Vang's vehicle to spin into the opposite lane of traffic. Another vehicle traveling in the opposite direction then hit Vang's vehicle. Vang died from injuries sustained in the collision, the driver of the other vehicle sustained a broken collarbone.

Vang left behind a pregnant wife and an infant child, Ramsey said. His second child was born shortly after his death.

Ramsey said Schalles had left her home in Chico around 7:30 p.m. and drove to two bars in Marysville to drink and buy drugs. An analysis of her blood revealed Schalles' blood alcohol content was 0.24 per cent, more than three times the legal limit and showed the presence of oxycodone in her system.

Ramsey said Schalles had previously been convicted of a DUI in 2012 during which time she engaged in alcohol programs as well as a DUI school. Schalles said she had been involved in Alcoholics Anonymous for at least 10 years prior to the collision. Schalles reportedly told a friend after the collision that, "They talk about it. One time. That's all it takes."

Ramsey said the murder charge rather than a manslaughter charge was pursued by his office because Schalles had been previously warned during her prior DUI hearing and in subsequent classes that should she drive under the influence and cause a death, she could be charged with murder. This subjective knowledge of the dangers of drinking and driving ultimately resulted in Schalles' murder conviction for the death of Vang.

Schalles will next appear in Butte County Superior Court on July 29, 2022 at 1:30 p.m. when she will be sentenced. She is facing a life sentence in state prison with the possibility of parole in 15 years. She continues to be held in the Butte County Jail with no bail.

