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PRESS RELEASE

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Chico Woman Sentenced for Murder in Hwy 70 DUI

A Chico woman was sentenced in Butte County Superior Court on Friday, August 26, 2022, for second-degree murder involving her drunken high-speed collision with another motorist on Highway 70 last year.

On February 4, 2021, at 11:25 p.m., Nicole Schalles, 36, of Chico, was driving her vehicle north on Highway 70 at speeds over 120 mph when she ran into the rear of another northbound vehicle on the road. The collision happened near Lower Honcut Road killing Dollar Vang, 30, of Olivehurst. Vang had been traveling from Olivehurst to work a night shift in Oroville when Schalles' vehicle overtook his as she traveled from Marysville back to 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 (south) direction then hit Vang's vehicle. Vang died from injuries sustained in the crash, and the driver of the other southbound vehicle sustained a broken collarbone.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Schalles had purchased a bottle of vodka earlier that morning and drank most of it throughout the day before she left her home in Chico after 7:30 p.m. Schalles then drove to two bars in Marysville to drink and buy illegal opiates. An analysis of her blood revealed that Schalles' blood alcohol content was more than three times the legal limit and showed the presence of oxycodone in her system.

Ramsey said Schalles was previously convicted of a DUI in 2012 during which time she was ordered into alcohol programs as well as a DUI School. Schalles described herself as being involved in Alcoholics Anonymous for at least 10 years before the collision. However, Ramsey said, Schalles was involved in a single car collision in 2019 that she later admitted occurred while she was drinking.

Ramsey said the murder charge resulted from Schalles having been previously warned during her prior DUI case and in subsequent DUI 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, and the grossly negligent nature of the recent collision with Vang, ultimately resulted in Schalles' murder conviction for the death of Vang.

At the sentencing hearing, Vang's family members addressed the court and provided insight into the life Vang had lived before being killed by Schalles. Vang was a father, brother, uncle, son, and friend and family members made it clear his death will impact the lives of the living forever. As one family member stated:

“Dollar was an amazing person and he had a bright future ahead of him. He had dreams that he was unable to accomplish because [Schalles] stole that from him. Dollar was a great father to his children, and he was excitedly waiting for the birth of another child. He did not even know the gender at the time [Schalles] took his life...All that was taken away from him.”

Schalles was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison. Under recent California prison policy, she will be eligible for parole in 10 years. Additionally, restitution was awarded to family members of the victims for expenses associated with their participation in the court process, travel expenses, and future child support for Vang's two minor children.

