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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 25, 2020

CHICO WOMAN SENTENCED TO PRISON IN VEHICULAR MANSLAUGHTER

The Chico woman recently convicted of vehicular manslaughter in a deadly 2019 crash on East Avenue in Chico, appeared in Butte County Superior Court today to face the wife and daughter of the man she killed and was sentenced to the maximum term of six years eight months in state prison.

Amery May Sweany, 24, of Chico stood before Judge Michael Deems this afternoon and apologized to the family of Virgil Santos, 64, of Chico for her actions leading to Mr. Santos' death. However Mr. Santos' wife and daughter told the judge how devastating the death of Mr. Santos has been on their lives and asked the maximum punishment be handed down. Noting that the daughter will be married this fall without her father to walk with her, and that the wife had to move from the family home to a cheaper apartment because of Sweany's grossly reckless actions, the judge sentenced Sweany to the maximum.

In April 2019, Sweany careened down East Avenue at speeds over 70 mph. Multiple witnesses reported seeing Sweany swerving around other cars on the road and weaving in and out of traffic as she approached the intersection at Marigold Avenue. Sweany ignored the red light and ran her car into a vehicle driven by Virgil Santos, 64, of Chico. Virgil's wife, Shelly Santos, 52, was a passenger in the vehicle.

Mr. Santos succumbed to injuries sustained from the collision, and died at Enloe Hospital. Ms. Santos sustained major injuries and underwent multiple surgeries in the months following the collision.

While in custody at the Butte County Jail, Sweany assaulted two correctional officers, punching one, and spitting on the other. Sweany had previously plead to one count of Resisting an Officer and one count of Battery upon an Officer, both misdemeanors.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey noted Sweany's case was delayed as her defense attorney sought to have her declared mentally incompetent to stand trial. A court-appointed psychologist finally opined she was competent to stand trial. Her attorney then attempted to place her into a mental health diversion program, but the Butte County Behavioral Health Department found she was unsuitable. Once she was finally set for jury trial, Sweany changed her plea to no contest.

Ramsey said Sweany's actions were particularly egregious because although not under the

influence, she nevertheless had detectable amounts of controlled substances in her system; she drove at a high rate of speed down a main street in Chico; and she showed no concern for the safety of those around her, causing death and serious injury.