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PRESS RELEASE

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Defendant Sentenced for Vehicular Manslaughter

A Chico man was sentenced today in the Butte County Superior Court for a tragic vehicle collision in which the defendant's inattention to the roadway and driving conditions resulted in the death of Victoria Nystrom, 36, of Paradise. Victoria was a mother of three and beloved by many, as evidenced by the nine family members and friends who spoke at the sentencing hearing despite the current health crisis of COVID-19.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced Jackson Bassow, 21, of Chico, was sentenced by Judge Corie Caraway to 180 days jail as part of a one-year term of formal probation and remanded to the county jail from court. The terms of his probation included restitution to the family of the victim and conditions to address substance abuse issues. The judge additionally ordered Bassow to do 200 hours of community service.

During an interview with a probation officer, Bassow acknowledged an addiction to several recreational controlled substances and claimed responsibility for the inattention that caused the collision which resulted in the death of Victoria Nystrom. Bassow and his wife were also severely injured in the collision.

Bassow was sentenced after entering a no contest plea to one count of vehicular manslaughter without gross negligence.

If Bassow violates his probation he will face up to one year in the county jail.

Ramsey said on the afternoon of March 14, 2020 the California Highway Patrol was called to the scene of a two vehicle collision on Highway 99 just south of Hamilton Nord Cana Highway. When officers of the California Highway Patrol arrived at the location, they found Bassow on a gurney being treated by emergency medical personnel and located Victoria Nystrom in the driver's seat of her vehicle with fatal injuries.

Upon a later review of Bassow's medical records, it was revealed that Bassow's urine had traces of four different drugs: MDMA, cocaine base, cannabinoids, and benzodiazepine. Additionally, Bassow and his wife had stayed up very late the night before and woke up after only a few hours of sleep before driving to Redding and back.

The conjunction of recent drug use and lack of sleep caused Bassow to take his attention from the roadway and drift into oncoming traffic. Bassow told officers that his wife was asleep as a

passenger in his car and he turned his attention to her when she spoke out from an apparent dream. When Bassow noticed that he was in the lane of oncoming traffic, he swerved back into his own lane, then overcorrected and drove into oncoming traffic once again, colliding head on with the vehicle being driven by Victoria Nystrom, killing her.

Ramsey said even though the evidence was insufficient to show Bassow was impaired by the drugs in his system, it was clear the combination of a lack of sleep and the drugs was sufficient to bring a criminal vehicular manslaughter charge. Ramsey also noted the probation time of only one year came under a new law passed by the legislature for this year reducing probation time from three years to one year.

