



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

MARK MURPHY
Chief Deputy District Attorney

JASON WINES
Chief Investigator



PRESS RELEASE

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Chico Woman Held to Answer for Murder Charges on Hwy 70 DUI that Killed One

A Chico woman was held to answer on charges of 2nd Degree Murder, Vehicular Manslaughter while Driving Under the Influence, and Driving Under the Influence Causing Great Bodily Injury, in Butte County Superior Court after a preliminary hearing was held today.

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 11:25pm near Lower Honcut Road killing Dollar Vang, 30, of Olivehurst. Vang had been traveling from Olivehurst to work 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 direction then hit Vang's vehicle. Vang died from injuries sustained in the collision, the driver of the other vehicle sustained a broken collarbone.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said that at the preliminary hearing today, it was determined that Schalles had left her home in Chico after 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 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 both alcohol programs as well as a Level One DUI School. Schalles described herself as being involved in Alcoholics Anonymous for at least 10 years prior to the collision. At the preliminary hearing it was discussed that Schalles told a friend, after the collision that, "They talk about it. One time. That's all it takes."

Ramsey said the murder charge resulted from Schalles having 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. Superior Court Judge Michael Deems agreed with the prosecution that the combination of the prior warning, the extreme speed and high blood alcohol level warranted the murder charge.

Schalles will next appear in Butte County Superior Court on August 19, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. when her jury trial date will be set. She is currently being held in the Butte County Jail with no bail.