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PRESS RELEASE

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CHICO WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO VEHICULAR MANSLAUGHTER

A Chico woman charged with manslaughter in a deadly 2019 crash on East Avenue in Chico, appeared in court today and pled as charged to charges of Gross Vehicular Manslaughter and Reckless Driving Causing Injury.

In April 2019, Amery May Sweany, 23, of Chico, 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, Ms. Sweany assaulted two correctional officers, punching one, and spitting on the other. In court today, Ms. Sweany also 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. Ramsey said his office will seek the maximum sentence allowed at sentencing.

Sweany is scheduled to be sentenced on June 25, 2020 at 1:30. She faces a maximum term of 6 years, 8 months in State Prison. She remains in custody without bail pending sentencing.