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For Immediate Release

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District Attorney's DUI Homicide Unit Secures Six Convictions in Ten Days

Deadly Drinking and Driving Persists in San Diego County

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that six defendants in separate criminal cases were convicted after killing someone while driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Each of the defendants was prosecuted by the DA's grant-funded [DUI Homicide Unit](#), which is a specialized team of prosecutors and investigators that handle cases through each step of the criminal process.

"In the span of two weeks, our DUI Homicide Unit brought a measure of justice and resolution to these fatal cases that unnecessarily shattered the lives of the victims' family and friends," DA Summer Stephan said. "So far this year, there have been 12 adult defendants charged with DUI murder or manslaughter, a crime that is 100 percent preventable."

Last week's convictions include:

Marco Antonio Pastor, 31, was convicted by a jury of second-degree murder for a fatal accident from October 2015. Pastor drove head on into a 77-year-old victim, killing him, while having a blood-alcohol content of .17 percent. The defendant had two prior DUI convictions at the time of the fatal crash. He is facing 15 years-to-life in prison.

Ricardo Vargas, 33, pleaded guilty to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated. In this case, Vargas lost control of his vehicle in March 2018, while driving on State Route 78 under the influence of alcohol, killing his female passenger. He is facing six years in prison.

Felix Ruiz Bazan, 26, pleaded guilty to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and stipulated to a 10-year prison sentence. Bazan killed an endurance cyclist while driving under the influence of methamphetamine. He faces 10 years in prison.

Chloe Gordon, 30, pleaded guilty to gross vehicular manslaughter for killing a motorist in May 2017. She had cocaine and marijuana in her system. She faces four years in prison.

Michael Gray, 50, pleaded guilty on the day of trial, to second-degree murder with two serious felony priors. Gray drove with a .24 percent blood-alcohol level along State Route

52 in February 2017 and drove onto the shoulder of the highway, crashing into and killing a tow truck driver, Fred Griffith. Gray then fled the scene. He has three prior DUIs going back to 1999. He is facing a stipulated sentence of 25 years-to-life in prison.

Joshua Ness, 33, pleaded guilty to gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated stemming from an August 14 incident in which he hit and killed a man crossing the street in El Cajon. Ness had consumed seven alcoholic beverages at dinner. After hitting the victim, Ness fled the scene returning half an hour later. His blood-alcohol level was .11 percent. He will receive a stipulated 15-year prison sentence.

“Even though we are down slightly in the number of defendants we have prosecuted in deadly DUI crashes, we are still having a terrible year of fatalities,” said Deputy DA Cally Bright, the director of the DUI Homicide Unit. “Already this year, 15 people have been killed and eight have been seriously injured because of the reckless choice to drink or do drugs and drive, despite the easy access to ride sharing options.”

The DA’s DUI Homicide Unit is in its fourth year of grant funding from the Office of Traffic Safety. As part of the grant and with assistance from the Southern California Training Center and the California Office of Traffic Safety, the unit continues to coordinate and participate in DUI prevention and awareness in schools, military bases and colleges. It also continues to provide training to local law enforcement agencies.

In 2017, there were 25 defendants charged with DUI murder or manslaughter, making it the worst year on record for DUI fatalities in San Diego County. This year, there have been 12 adult defendants charged with DUI murder or manslaughter.

“We are committed to addressing this public safety threat through a combination of awareness and serious criminal consequences for driving while impaired,” DA Stephan said.

The DUI Homicide Unit streamlines complex DUI cases by creating expertise within the office. This results in a quicker resolution to cases and speedier justice to the families who have lost a loved one. The specialized unit creates uniformity in sentencing among the four adult courthouses. In addition, the unit helps law enforcement adapt to changes in technology by having a designated DA Investigator who is trained in the latest techniques in collision reconstruction.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue justice and support victims daily across San Diego County. DA Summer Stephan has devoted her life to protecting children and families and providing justice to the voiceless and most vulnerable. She is a national leader in the fight against sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and has served as a Deputy District Attorney in San Diego County for 28 years.

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