



NEWS RELEASE

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HAWTHORNE MAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS FOR AGGRAVATED MANSLAUGHTER

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

December 15, 2017

Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes announces that the Honorable Joseph A. Portelli, J.S.C., sentenced James Woetzel, 51 of Hawthorne, to twenty (20) years in New Jersey State Prison for first degree Aggravated Manslaughter in the 2014 death of Donna Wine, 58, of Hawthorne.

The evidence presented to the jury during trial demonstrated that the defendant was under the influence of Difluoroethane, the volatile substance found in compressed air cleaner, at the time he drove through the Hawthorne farmers market. On August 10, 2014, at approximately 2:12 p.m., the defendant drove his 2014 Dodge Ram truck through the barricades separating the farmers market from the street on Grand Avenue in Hawthorne NJ, and struck Ms. Wine, as she was standing at a vegetable stand, trapping her under the truck. The defendant continued to drive for .36 miles prior to being flagged down by another motorist.

On September 14, 2017, following just over a day of deliberations, the jury returned guilty verdicts on first degree Aggravated Manslaughter, first degree Death by Auto within 1000 Feet of a School, and second degree Death by Auto. The defendant was found not guilty of Knowingly Leaving the Scene of an Accident Resulting in Death, a second degree offense.

Mr. Woetzel was sentenced to twenty (20) years in New Jersey State Prison for Aggravated Manslaughter, with 85% of those terms to be served before parole pursuant to the No Early Release Act and 5 years parole supervision. This sentence was ordered to run concurrent with the first degree Death by Auto conviction. Judge Portelli also imposed a twenty (20) year loss of driving privileges, to begin the date of his release from prison

The State was represented by Assistant Prosecutor Julie Serfess, and Assistant Prosecutor Stephen Bollenbach. The defendant was represented by attorneys Leigh Saltiel and Jeremy Richmond.

Any inquiries may be directed to Passaic County Assistant Prosecutor Julie Serfess, who can be reached at 973-881-4848 or jserfess@passaiccountynj.org.



(Photo: James Woetzel)