



Orange County News

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District Attorney Hoovler Announces State Prison Sentence in Pine Bush New Years' Eve Party Homicide

*Defendant who Stabbed Victim to Death During Underage Drinking Party
Sentenced to 5-15 Years in State Prison*

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced that on Monday, May 15, 2017, Jauntae Brown, age 20, of Spring Valley, was sentenced by Orange County Court Judge Craig Stephen Brown to five to fifteen years in state prison. On March 8, 2017, Brown had pled guilty to one count of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, in connection with the New Years' morning stabbing death of Justin Speights at a party in the Town of Crawford.

In the early morning hours of January 1, 2016, Justin Speights, who was a volunteer firefighter and numerous other people were at a New Years' Eve party at a private residence in the Town of Crawford. Many of the partygoers were under the legal drinking age of 21. At some point during the party, a number of fights broke out. Based on the investigation of the case, it is believed that Mr. Speights was trying to break up one of those fights, when Brown stabbed him twice in the abdomen. The stab wounds ultimately resulted in Mr. Speights' death. When he pled guilty, Brown admitted that Mr. Speights was unarmed when he was stabbed, and that he did not stab Mr. Speights in self-defense. The knife which was used in the stabbing was recovered by members of the Silver Lake Fire Company, where Speights served as a volunteer firefighter.

The incident became the impetus for the Orange County Legislature's unanimous passage in February 2016 of Orange County's Social Host Law, which County Executive Steve Neuhaus signed into law and which became effective on March 17, 2016. District Attorney Hoovler originally proposed the Social Host Law, which makes it a criminal offense for adults to permit underage drinking on premises that are under their control.

District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police and the Town of Crawford Police Department for their efforts in the investigation and prosecution of the case. District Attorney Hoovler also thanked the Silver Lakes Fire Company for their assistance in finding the

weapon used in the crime, as well as in encouraging residents with information concerning the crime to come forward.

“Justin Speights was an exceptional young man, and his slaying was a senseless act of violence,” said District Attorney Hoovler. “The circumstances which gave rise to his death were no doubt exacerbated by the underage drinking which occurred at this party. Senseless violence and alcohol frequently go together. I commend the New York State Police and the Town of Crawford Police Department for their persistence and the professionalism they demonstrated in this investigation. I am particularly thankful for the actions of the Silver Lakes Fire Company not in only in recovering the key item of physical evidence in this case, but also for all the assistance they provided to the police and my office by urging members of the community to come forward with information concerning this crime. Their spirit of volunteerism, which was shared by Justin Speights, enriches all the community as they continue to cope with their loss.”

District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael Milza for his prosecution of this very difficult case.

