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Drunk Driver Sentenced to 7 Years in Prison for Causing Deadly Crash

AKRON, Ohio (Tuesday, April 18, 2017) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Christine Croce sentenced Brandon Pheneger, 38, of Wadsworth Road in Norton, to a seven year prison sentence for driving drunk and killing 39-year-old Rachel Townsend. Judge Croce also suspended Pheneger’s driver’s license for life.

On February 28, 2017, Pheneger pled guilty to the following charges:

- Aggravated Vehicular Homicide – a felony of the 2nd degree
- Driving Under the Influence – a misdemeanor of the 1st degree

“Rachel lost her life because of a selfish, senseless act. Her husband, father, family, and friends are devastated because of one person’s decision to drink and drive,” said Prosecutor Walsh. “Although Mr. Pheneger must serve every day of his seven year sentence, it will not ease the suffering Rachel’s family has endured. This is a horrible reminder of the dangers of drinking and driving.”

Late at night on July 29, 2016, Pheneger was driving south bound on I-77 in Coventry Township when his pick-up truck turned left into the median and went airborne across the median into oncoming traffic. Rachel Townsend was travelling northbound on I-77 when her vehicle was struck by Pheneger’s truck. Investigators determined the alcohol level in Pheneger’s blood was nearly three times the legal limit.