



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Drunk Driver Pleads Guilty to Involuntary Manslaughter in Death of Springfield Nurse

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Matthew Charles Brannon, 32, of Springfield, MO entered a guilty plea to involuntary manslaughter in the first degree for causing the death of Kathryn Wells, who was 55. Wells, a hospice nurse and former “Nurse of the Year,” lived in Springfield at the time of her death. The case was set for trial today.

Wells was killed on October 16, 2010 at the intersection of Mt. Vernon and Kansas Expressway in Springfield, when a vehicle driven by Brannon collided with a vehicle she was operating. Wells’ vehicle struck a light pole on the corner of Mt. Vernon and Kansas Expressway, and burst into flames. Wells died at the scene. Eyewitnesses and a crash reconstruction expert estimated that Brannon was driving between 72 and 92 miles per hour in a 45 mile per hour zone leading up to the crash. Following the collision, the defendant’s blood alcohol content was determined to be .159%. Brannon admitted that he had been consuming alcohol earlier in the day, and that he thought he could drive because he was “only a little buzzed.” Brannon has one prior conviction for driving while intoxicated, as well as convictions for speeding.

There was no plea agreement in the case. Brannon is subject to 5 years to 15 years in the Department of Corrections. He will be required to serve 85% of any prison sentence before becoming eligible for parole. Judge Holden set a sentencing hearing for June 18, 2012 at 10:30 a.m., following a sentencing assessment report by the Department of Probation and Parole.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Emily Carlstrom. It was investigated by the Springfield Police Department and Officer Doug Hinkle was the lead investigator assigned to the case.

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