

NEWS RELEASE

R. Andrew Murray
District Attorney

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Michael Harvey pleads guilty to manslaughter and other charges

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – This afternoon, Michael Neal Harvey, 37, pled guilty to Involuntary Manslaughter and Concealing a Death and admitted his status as an Habitual Felon. Harvey was sentenced by the Honorable Hugh B. Lewis, Superior Court Judge, to 87-114 months in prison.



Michael Harvey

These charges stem from the September 15, 2010, overdose death of Valerie Hamilton. Ms. Hamilton and the defendant met at Thomas Street Tavern on the evening of Tuesday, September 14, 2010, and returned to the defendant's residence together after 2:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning. While at the defendant's residence, the two used heroin. There is some evidence that the defendant injected Ms. Hamilton with the heroin but that evidence is inconclusive and contested.

Witnesses later saw Ms. Hamilton incoherent in the defendant's room and told the defendant to get her medical attention. Instead of getting Ms. Hamilton the medical attention she needed, the defendant drove her to a motel. Hotel security saw Ms. Hamilton slumped over in the defendant's truck in the parking lot, but noted she was breathing. The defendant told hotel security that Ms. Hamilton was drunk.

The defendant told police that he put Ms. Hamilton to bed at the motel and woke on Wednesday, September 15, to find her dead. On the morning of Thursday, September 16, the defendant wrapped Hamilton's body in a sheet, hid her body in a storage unit, and fled to New York. Ms. Hamilton's body was found by police on September 18, 2010, and Harvey was arrested in New York on September 20.

After his arrest, Harvey denied providing or injecting Hamilton with any drugs and no witnesses were discovered who knew otherwise; however, Harvey admitted to interfering with Hamilton's ability to get medical treatment by moving her to the motel and away from other possible sources of assistance. That conduct constitutes Involuntary Manslaughter. Absent more conclusive proof that the defendant provided or injected the heroin, the District Attorney's Office was unable to proceed with a second-degree murder charge.

Friends of the victim reported that Ms. Hamilton had previously struggled with a cocaine addiction. At the time of her death, Ms. Hamilton's blood and urine contained cocaine, morphine (heroin), pain-killers and a blood alcohol level of 0.18. The medical examiner ruled the cause of death to be combined heroin and cocaine toxicity.

The District Attorney's Office agreed to allow the defendant to plead to these charges after consultation with the victim's father, Merl Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton has asked this office to include the following statement to the media and has asked that the media respect the privacy of his family in this difficult time.

Statement from Merl Hamilton:

"Valerie's family would like to thank all of the law enforcement officers who assisted in investigating this case, particularly those of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department. We would also like to thank the members of the District Attorney's office who worked very hard to find justice for everyone involved. Lastly, we would like to thank the community for their support. Valerie was always accountable for mistakes she made in her life. As her father, I am acutely aware of my responsibility for the mistakes she and I collectively made in her life. Her family hopes Mr. Harvey is able to confront his responsibility for the role he played in her death. Because of the immense pain and discomfort the media attention in this case causes Val's family, this is the only comment anyone in the family will make concerning this case."

// End //

