

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



THOMAS J. SPOTA
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 9, 2014

Hit and run driver who killed young mother to be sentenced tomorrow

District Attorney Spota calls for tougher sentencing law now

An Eastport man who pleaded guilty to the fatal hit and run death last November of a 27 year old mother on Montauk Highway is scheduled for sentencing tomorrow, Tuesday June 10, in Central Islip, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota said.

Erika Strebel died November 2 last year on Montauk Highway in Eastport when she was run down while putting gas in her black 1988 Jeep Cherokee parked on the eastbound shoulder.

Peter Torrillo, 48, of 13 East Pond Lane, Eastport, fled the scene after striking Strebel and her passenger Edward Barton, who was severely injured. "A witness reported a large truck heading east with one headlight out just before driving past the scene of the crash. Prosecutors in our Vehicular Crimes Bureau eventually prepared and executed a search warrant to recover the vehicle when we learned the defendant took his 1999 pick-up truck to a body shop in Queens," DA Spota said. "The county crime lab matched paint chips at the crash scene to Torrillo's GMC Sierra."

The death of the young mother illustrates the need for a tougher law in the State of New York where today it actually benefits a driver who may be drunk or impaired by drugs to leave the scene, District Attorney Spota said.

“A drunk or drug impaired driver who kills someone may face up to 25 years in prison. But fleeing the accident scene allows the wrongdoer a chance to sober up, and under the current law, any driver guilty of a hit and run faces a maximum prison sentence of seven years - even when someone dies and even if the defendant has a prior felony record,” said DA Spota.

“This profound encouragement to leave the scene must be eliminated. I urge the state Senate and Assembly, now in the final weeks of their legislative session in Albany, to vote for a tougher sentence and more than double the maximum punishment for a convicted hit and run driver. It’s time to close this loophole in the state’s vehicle and traffic law and give us the tools to ensure that intoxicated drivers are held accountable.”

District Attorney Spota added that in the defendant’s statement to police, Torrillo said after the crash he went to a bar in Center Moriches to listen to a band.

State Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho in Central Islip will sentence Torrillo tomorrow morning for leaving the scene of an accident. The calendar call starts at 9:30 am.



SCDA COMMUNICATIONS

(631) 853-4118