

Man's joyriding night leads to prison term

BY KEITH EPPS / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

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A former repair shop manager who took a customer's car on an ill-fated joyride in August was ordered Thursday to serve just over a year and a half in jail.

Sinda S. Lokayi, 30, of Fredericksburg pleaded guilty in Fredericksburg Circuit Court to felony eluding, unauthorized use of a vehicle and three counts of misdemeanor hit-and-run. He was sentenced to a total of 10 years with all but a year and seven months suspended.

Lokayi had previously been convicted of driving while intoxicated in connection with the same case.

According to the evidence presented by prosecutor Travis Bird, Lokayi was working for the Tire Zone on Princess Anne Street in August when a customer brought in a Ford Lincoln SUV for brake work.

Lokayi told police that the work had been completed when he took the vehicle out for a test drive. He stopped at a friend's house, where he got intoxicated, according to the story.

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Officer Rich Young was on patrol about 11:30 p.m. Aug. 9 when he saw the SUV being driven erratically in the area of Caroline and Canal streets. Young tried to stop the driver, who sped off toward Riverside Drive going more than 70 mph.

He slammed into a boat and a trailer on Riverside before continuing onto Fall Hill Avenue. He continued driving at a high speed even after blowing out some tires, and at one point was traveling the wrong way on a one-way section of Fall Hill.

The pursuit ended on Prince Edward Street, where the driver crashed the now ruined SUV into two parked cars. Lokayi ran from the wrecked SUV but was caught before getting very far.

Bird said that when asked how much he'd had to drink, Lokayi responded, "Clearly too much for this."

Lokayi, who was represented by attorney Jim Ilijevich, has since apologized for his actions and written that he intends to continue seeking help for his alcohol problems.

Bird said a hearing will be held later to determine how much restitution Lokayi owes.

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