

## Heroin supplier gets five years

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BY KEITH EPPS

A man who supplied the drugs that killed a young woman last year was ordered yesterday to serve five years in prison.

Ronald Mason Smith, 44, had previously been convicted in Fredericksburg Circuit Court of involuntary manslaughter and distributing heroin.

Kristina Burd, 19, was found dead April 21, 2009, in a bed in the 200 block of Kings Mill Court in Fredericksburg. She was one of six people at the apartment the previous night using heroin that had been provided by Smith, according to the evidence.

She was scheduled to go into a drug-treatment facility the next month, prosecutor Travis Bird said.

As part of a plea agreement, Smith of Stafford County could not get more than five years to serve. Judge Gordon Willis gave him a total of 30 years with all but five suspended.

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Bird described Smith, who now has 25 criminal convictions, as a "one-man crime spree."

The prosecutor said he agreed to the five-year maximum in part because the witnesses he would have used against Smith were less than stellar. Several of them have picked up criminal charges or convictions since Burd's death.

Evidence showed that residents went to the room Burd was sleeping in about 10 that morning after hearing an alarm clock sounding. They found her dead and waited about 15 minutes to call 911 because they needed time to get rid of illegal drugs and paraphernalia still in the apartment.

Police said the delay did not contribute to Burd's death because she had been dead for some time.

The witnesses initially told police that no one had been using drugs and there had been none in the apartment. They changed their stories in subsequent interviews, Bird said, and identified Smith as their supplier.

The witness were mostly between 18 and 22, considerably younger than Smith.

One told police she bought \$60 worth of food for Smith with her food stamp card in exchange for \$30 worth of heroin.

Another said he paid \$300 to Smith for 10 Dilaudid pills. He said Smith had only five pills, so he gave him heroin to make up the difference.

Smith entered Alford pleas to the charges--not admitting guilt, but acknowledging that there was enough evidence to convict him.

He claimed yesterday that he brought Dilaudid to the gathering that night but not heroin. He denied injecting the heroin into Burd, but said he didn't fight the charges because he felt partially responsible for contributing to the evening.

Smith seemed at bit unnerved at times yesterday while under cross-examination from Bird.

At one point he said, "I sold drugs, but I am not a drug dealer." He later acknowledged that his criminal record, which includes six felony convictions, "looks pretty bad."

Judge Willis also heard from Burd's family, who said that while she had a problem with drugs, she was a good person who had a promising future.

"This is not something that should have happened to such a good person," said Hillary Canada, her sister. "I'm going through a lot of good things right now that I can't share with her."

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