

Man pleads in heroin death

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BY KEITH EPPS

A man who provided the heroin that resulted in the death of a 19-year-old woman earlier this year was convicted of two charges yesterday.

Ronald Mason Smith, 43, was found guilty in Fredericksburg Circuit Court of involuntary manslaughter and distributing heroin.

As part of a plea agreement, prosecutor Travis Bird agreed to seek no more than five years in prison when Smith is sentenced Nov. 25.

According to the evidence, Kristina Burd of King George was found dead in a bed in the 200 block of Kings Mill Court in Fredericksburg the morning of April 21.

Burd was one of six people at the apartment the night of April 20 using heroin that had been provided by Smith.

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

Residents went to Burd's room after hearing an alarm clock sounding about 10 a.m., prosecutor Bird said. They forced their way in and found her dead.

Bird said the witnesses waited about 15 minutes before calling 911 because they needed to get rid of illegal drugs and paraphernalia still in the apartment.

But Burd had already been dead for some time, so the delay did not contribute to her death.

The witnesses actually called Smith before calling police, Bird said. Smith got there before the police and told the others, "I was never here. Don't bring my name up."

The witnesses initially told police that no one had been using drugs in the apartment and there had been none in the apartment.

They changed their stories in subsequent interviews, Bird said.

The prosecutor pointed out that most of his witnesses are drug users who are in jail and/or have pending charges.

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 an Alford plea to the charges yesterday, which means that he does not admit guilt but acknowledges the evidence is enough to convict him.

Attorney Jim Ilijevich represented Smith.

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