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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Sue Baur or Michelle Shaffer

MAN SENTENCED PLEADS GUILTY TO KILLING INFANT

On April 10, 2007, Kyle David Wolff, 21, pleaded guilty to Manslaughter in the First Degree in the death of 10-month-old James Camarena. A Cowlitz County Superior Court Judge sentenced Wolff to 102 months in prison after hearing the facts that the State would have presented if the case had gone to trial. Under Washington law, a person is guilty of manslaughter in the first degree when he recklessly causes the death of another person.

According to Prosecuting Attorney Sue Baur and Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Amie Hunt who prosecuted the case, on October 21, 2006, Wolff and the baby's aunt were watching the baby at a residence in Kelso. Wolff and the baby's 16-year-old mother were dating at the time. At approximately 1:40 p.m., the aunt placed the baby in his crib. James was happy and had no recent visible injuries. The aunt checked on the baby, who was sleeping peacefully, before leaving the residence at 2:10 p.m., leaving the baby alone with Wolff.

At around 4:00 p.m., a neighbor went to the residence to borrow a plunger. Before the neighbor had a chance to knock, Wolff met him at the top of the stairs to the residence and asked him what he wanted. The neighbor said he needed to borrow a plunger. Wolff said he would get the plunger, asked the neighbor to wait outside, and ran to bathroom. The neighbor thought it strange

Wolff did not invite him inside as Wolfe usually did, so while waiting at the front door the neighbor looked inside and saw the baby lying motionless on his back with his arms bent back over his head. The neighbor asked Wolff if he was alone with the baby. Wolff said he was. The neighbor asked if the baby was o.k. Wolff assured the neighbor the baby was fine, and gave him the plunger. The neighbor thought Wolff was acting very strange and nervous. The neighbor went back to his own residence. After about 20 minutes, the neighbor saw an ambulance arrive.

Wolff had called 911 at 4:16 p.m., reporting he had found the baby in his crib not breathing and limp. The 911 operator talked Wolff through CPR, and Wolff told the operator he was following her instructions, although he later admitted to the Cowlitz County Sheriff's detectives who investigated the case that he did not in fact perform CPR on the baby. When medics arrived they saw bruising on the baby's forehead, and he was not breathing. Life Flight transported the baby to Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland. At the hospital, the detectives and a doctor noticed several bruises on the baby's body. The doctor also found there was severe retinal bleeding and the backs of the eyes were hemorrhaging. After just a few hours, physicians at OHSU declared James brain dead. Several days later, life support was terminated, and James Camarena died on October 24.

A medical examiner performed an autopsy and discovered an additional bruise on the back of the baby's skull, as well as bleeding in the brain. The examiner determined the baby died of closed head trauma and that the injuries were likely caused from forcibly striking the baby against a hard surface.

During interviews with the detectives, Wolff admitted he did not like caring for James and that it bothered him to take care of someone else's child. Wolff said that he particularly did not like bathing James or changing his diaper and admitted he did not want to baby-sit that day. However, he said that he did not have a choice because James's mother had to work

Wolff was originally charged with murder in the first degree. According to Hunt, "The State has no doubt that Wolff is wholly responsible for the victim's death. However, it is also the State's duty to take into consideration the most plausible and reasonably foreseeable defenses that Wolff

may have raised at trial in determining what verdict a jury most likely would have returned and whether that verdict is just. In this case, after full consideration of the all of the evidence that would have been presented at trial by the State and by the defense, the most likely outcome was manslaughter in the first degree. However, we can never lessen the tragedy of the loss of the life of James Camarena.”

Baur added, “Unfortunately, we see a frequent combination of risk factors present in many cases inflicted head trauma to babies. A very young parent, or parents, or caretaker, with little or no experience with children, is left alone to care for the child. Often perpetrators shake or hit a baby out of frustration or anger. A simple lack of patience or coping skills in a young caretaker, coupled with lack of child-care skills, and often the unavailability of a support system for young parents, can lead to tragic results. A person who reacts quickly and angrily to an infant can very easily inflict fatal injuries with an amount of force that an adult could withstand. The perpetrator may not intend the death; however, under the law, the shaking or use of force can be considered an assault, which, when death ensues can be manslaughter or murder.”