NATHAN GARZA MURDERER SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON

A Napa County Superior Court jury found Christopher Young guilty of the murder of Nathan Garza, an 18-year-old Fairfield resident who was shot while working at Safeway in American Canyon on August 16, 2020.

In addition to the first-degree murder conviction, Mr. Young was convicted of Shooting From a Motor Vehicle, Felon in Possession of a Firearm, Felon in Possession of Ammunition, and Giving False Information to a Police Officer. The jury found true special circumstances of personally and intentionally discharging a firearm, firing a weapon from a vehicle with the intent to inflict death, and lying in wait.

The sentencing of Mr. Young occurred on June 9, 2023, in a Napa Superior Courtroom in which the Honorable Judge Elia Ortiz sentenced the defendant to two consecutive life terms, one term of life in prison without the possibility of parole and another term of 28 years to life.

The case was prosecuted by DDAs Taryn Hunter and Diane Knoles. The investigation was conducted by Napa County Sheriff’s Detective Shamus Stafford. District Attorney staff including DA Investigator Rachel Cardin, Victim Advocate Belinda Ruiz, Investigation Technician Lauren Weitz, and Legal Clerk Karla Lopez, were instrumental in preparing the case for trial.
It's my pleasure to welcome you to the very first edition of Newsline, the Napa County District Attorney’s official newsletter.

As Napa County DA, I often think about ways to improve communication and provide news and updates regarding to the work that we do both in and out of the courtroom.

It wasn’t until the arrival of our new Public Information Officer, Carlos Villatoro, that we put our plan into motion and now bring to you our first offering of Newsline.

Inside this edition, you will find updates on the various cases my office handles on behalf of the people, updates on the Napa DA’s Office, important tips to keep yourselves and your families safe, and much more.

We will also use the newsletter to highlight some of our community partners who assist us in our mission of seeking justice for the people of Napa through the criminal court system.

Many of our partners aren’t law enforcement at all, and we hope to recognize their contributions to our overall goal of keeping Napa safe for locals and tourists alike.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Newsline and find it useful.
Unlike the summertime living, the workload at the Napa County District Attorney’s Office is never easy. Thankfully, the arrival of the Napa DA’s two summer law clerks helped lighten the load.

In early June, the Napa DA’s Office welcomed UC Davis School of Law students Hannah Maltzan and Jay Rodacker to its ranks as part of its seasonal internship program.

Jay and Hannah’s arrival to the Napa DA’s Office is part of District Attorney Allison Haley’s commitment to investing in the futures of law students who are interested in pursuing a career in criminal law.

“It is my responsibility as a District Attorney to raise up a generation of ethical, methodical, passionate attorneys behind me,” she said. “The lessons they learn, the relationships they build and the experiences they have early in their career will set the tone for the rest of their professional lives.”

Each summer and fall, Napa DA’s Office hosts law students from regional universities who have expressed interest in working alongside Napa DAs and learning the ropes of the criminal court system in Napa. During their time in Napa, Jay

Continued on Page 4
Continued from Page 3

and Hannah will assist Napa DAs with everything from writing motions to arguing hearings in court and may be assigned a special project or two.

Hannah is entering her third year at UC Davis School of Law. A native of Los Angeles, Hannah attended Davidson College in North Carolina, and subsequently returned to California to attend law school at UCD.

“I have wanted to work in a prosecutor’s office since college and plan to continue that route after graduating law school,” she said. “I have always wanted to serve the community in my career. I believe that at the heart of a prosecutor’s work is service to the community because of the direct impact they have on the lives of community members.”

Jay is also entering his third year of studying law at UC Davis School of Law. He is a native of Lodi and attended California State University at Long Beach for college, eventually making his way back to the Northern California.

“Growing up in a law enforcement family, I became aware of the far-reaching impacts crime can have on a community,” he said. “Out of that grew an interest in criminal prosecution to give a voice to victims and to hold those who harm the community accountable. I look forward to serving Napa County this summer!”

Through their work at the Napa DA’s Office, the students will gain real-world experience while representing the people of Napa in cases heard at the Napa Superior Court.

Jay and Hannah will be supervised by two veteran prosecutors within the Napa DA’s Office in Kristen Orlando and Nina Jehle, who are both excited to mentor the future attorneys.

Ian joined the Napa DA’s Office back in 2019 and serves as a Major in the US Army. Outside of the work he does on behalf of the people in the courtroom, Ian also works with a DUI Task Force consisting of the Napa DA’s Office and law enforcement agencies throughout the county who meet regularly to talk about the issue, share best practices and information, and offer advice on how to best investigate and document DUls in Napa County.

For his efforts, Ian will be honored at an upcoming MADD Law Enforcement Recognition Event, and the Napa County DA’s Office couldn’t be prouder of him.
Joe Perry, Investigator

Joe Perry joined the Napa County District Attorney’s Office in mid-May. He comes to the DA’s Office from the Napa Sheriff’s Office and was assigned to the Northern California Computer Crimes Taskforce (NC3TF).

Joe began his career in law enforcement in 2007 at the Fairfield Police Department, where he also held a variety of assignments. Joe has extensive training in computer and cellular phone forensics and has worked as an Investigator for the Northern California Computer Crimes Task Force since March 2022.

Colleen McMahon, Deputy District Attorney

Colleen McMahon joined the Napa DA’s Office in mid-May and comes to Napa from the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office.

Colleen has worked as a prosecutor since 1997 in Contra Costa, Santa Clara and Alameda counties. She has significant experience in handling sexual assault, elder, consumer fraud, juvenile, mental health, general felony, murder and various other case types.

Colleen will represent the people of Napa as part of the Napa DA’s General Felony Team.

Carlos Villatoro, Public Affairs & Media Officer

Carlos Villatoro joined the DA’s Office in early May and previously worked for the Medical Board of California.

Carlos formerly worked as a senior information officer for the California National Primate Research Center at UC Davis, and as an information officer 1 (bilingual) for the California Department of Public Health.

He is a former reporter who was named Napa Valley Hispanic Citizen of the Year in 2010.
Much of the work that the Napa County District Attorney’s Office performs on behalf of the people takes place in a courtroom, but some of it also takes place outside in the community.

In late May, Napa Deputy DA Kecia Lind teamed up with News - Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse Services, SAVS, Napa Police Department, Napa County Sheriff’s Office, and Napa Junction Elementary School to provide workshops in English and Spanish designed to help parents protect their children from sexual abuse. The workshops provided parents and guardians advice on how to spot the signs of sexual abuse, how to talk to their children about it and how to keep them safe and healthy. Both presentations were well-attended, and parents asked plenty of thoughtful questions.

Back in April, the Napa DA’s Office and its partners held a similar workshop at Calistoga High School and will continue to provide this type of outreach in its effort to keep the community safe through public education and engagement.
Outreach

IN THE COMMUNITY

EMR Preparedness Fair 5/12/2023

Housing Rights Clinic 5/19/2023

Child Abuse Workshop 5/31/2023
People v. Melinda Stewart

Melinda Stewart, a Napa woman who was charged with 23 misdemeanor crimes involving her possession of dozens of large Goldendoodles, pled no contest to five counts of dogs at large prohibited, one count of assault of an animal services officer, one count of public nuisance, one count of illegal breeding without a proper dog kennel permit, and one count for disobeying a Judge’s order to surrender the dogs.

The plea agreement reached between Ms. Stewart and the DA’s Office calls for one year of formal probation with various terms and conditions. The terms of Ms. Stewart’s proposed probation include no early termination of probation; no reduction of the misdemeanors to infractions; waive the right to appeal; book and release; 40 hours of community service; prohibited from obtaining/owning/possessing/controlling any dogs with the exception of four of the Goldendoodles she owns (along with other conditions such as the dogs must be spayed/neutered); refrain from engaging in any breeding activity, full search and seizure including electronics, no uninvited/harassing contact with identified neighbors; and restitution.

The case was prosecuted by DDA Shashawnya Worley. Sentencing in this case is scheduled for August 7, 2023.

People v. Alan Jazeel Martinez & Luis Fajardo Melgoza

Alan Jazeel Martinez, age 22, and Luis Fajardo Melgoza, age 20, are being charged for murder in connection with the fentanyl-related death of 17-year-old Monica Flores.

In addition to the murder charges, both defendants are charged with the sale of a controlled substance to a minor; transportation for sale of a controlled substance; possession for sale of a controlled substance; conspiracy to commit a crime; and child abuse likely to cause great bodily injury or death.
Both men are also being charged with the following aggravating factors: violence, cruelty, viciousness, or callousness; vulnerable victim; inducing others to participate in a crime; inducing a minor to participate in a crime; and planning, sophistication, and professionalism.

A third defendant in this case, Erika Garcia Chavez, age 23, is being charged with conspiracy to commit a crime and possession for sale of a controlled substance.

Mr. Martinez and Mr. Melgoza are scheduled for a July 25, 2023, plea/setting hearing in Napa County Superior Court.

**People v. Garrett Lars Elshere**

Garrett Lars Elshere, age 44, was found guilty of two counts of domestic violence false imprisonment, intimidating a witness, and assault with a deadly weapon. The court also found true several special allegations including committing domestic violence within seven years of a previous domestic violence conviction.

Mr. Elshe’s conviction is related to the November 5, 2020, assault of a woman he was dating at the time at a local hotel. The defendant was on parole for a previous domestic violence incident that occurred on January 23, 2015, at the time he committed the 2020 assault.

Further, while Mr. Elshere was awaiting trial for the 2020 domestic violence case, he stabbed a Napa man nearly to death during an August 27, 2021, attack that took place at McPherson Elementary School. He was recently sentenced to 22 years to life in state prison for the attempted murder.

Mr. Elshere is scheduled for a sentencing hearing on July 19, 2022, in Napa County Superior Court for the domestic violence case he was recently convicted of.

**People v. Tuong Nguyen**

Tuong Nguyen, age 43, is being charged with attempted murder, carjacking special allegation - use of a firearm, shooting at occupied motor vehicle, shooting from a motor vehicle, felon in possession of firearm, possession of ammo by a prohibited person, carrying a loaded firearm, and carrying a loaded firearm - not registered owner.

In addition to the above-mentioned charges, Mr. Nguyen is being charged with the following special allegations: personal use of a firearm, great bodily injury, use of weapon, vulnerable victim, violent conduct, increasing seriousness of priors/sustained petitions, and prior prison term.

Mr. Nguyen last appeared in court on June 30, 2022, in which the Honorable Napa County Superior Court Judge Joseph Solga granted his Counsel’s motion for a continuance of the preliminary hearing, originally scheduled for that date.

Mr. Nguyen is due in court for a Pre-Preliminary Examination at 9 a.m., on August 2, 2023.
Follow us on Social Media & Let’s get Connected

facebook.com/NapaCountyDA

twitter.com/NapaCountyDA

youtube.com or scan code