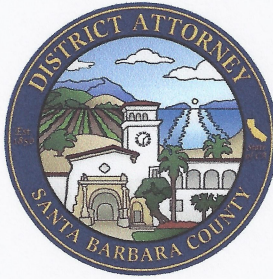


OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA  
**JOYCE E. DUDLEY**  
District Attorney



DA 09-121

RELEASE NUMBER

September 18, 2012

RELEASE DATE

APPROVED BY JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Steve Foley, Chief Deputy District Attorney

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\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

September 18, 2012

**Re: *People v. Benny Contreras***

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that Benny Contreras, was sentenced to three years formal probation for committing the crime of Misdemeanor Vehicular Manslaughter. Although the district attorney and the victim's family requested that the 84-year old defendant be sentenced to 120 days of house arrest, Judge Bullard stated that he did not think custody time was appropriate due to the lack of aggravating factors, such as speeding and cell phone use. Instead Judge Bullard sentenced him to 100 hours of community service and ordered him to pay restitution to the victim's family. His driver's license was also suspended for three years.

The charges stem from a traffic collision that occurred on April 29, 2012, on southbound Route 1 between Santa Maria and Lompoc. James Hamlin, a 58-year old Santa Maria man, was killed as a result of the collision. Mr. Hamlin was legally riding his bicycle on the shoulder when the collision occurred.

During the powerful and compelling sentencing proceedings today, a video was shown of Mr. Hamlin's life. Craig Hamlin spoke about his brother and a letter from their mother was read to the court.

In response to today's sentencing District Attorney Joyce Dudley stated the following, "No one involved in this collision can escape a pervasive sense of loss and pain. This is a tragic reminder that automobiles remain deadly weapons and all drivers must be vigilant in their attentiveness."

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