

## **Man is sentenced in fatal crash Accident last year claimed life of college student; motorist was driving drunk.**

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### **Body**

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A judge **sentenced** an illegal immigrant on Thursday to 10 **years** in prison for causing an **accident** here **last year** that killed 21-**year**-old **college student** Nicole Allen and seriously injured two of her friends.

Pedro Santos, 27, pleaded guilty Nov. 26 before St. Louis County Circuit Judge Michael T. Jamison to charges of involuntary manslaughter, leaving the scene of an **accident** and two counts of assault.

Jamison heard tearful testimony in an emotion-laden hearing Thursday, as well as a sobbing apology from the defendant through an interpreter. The judge said he read scores of letters that he received about the case and deliberated long and hard before rendering his decision.

Santos admitted he was **drunk** at 11:57 p.m. April 20 when he plowed a Lincoln Town Car into the back of a 1991 Acura, stopped at a red light at the intersection of Marine Avenue and Bennington Place in Maryland Heights.

The impact killed Allen, a junior at the University of Missouri-St. Louis who was a 2004 graduate of Parkway North High School. Allen was a passenger in the back seat. Seriously injured were another passenger, Charles A. "Chuck" Miller III, 28, and the driver, Larry Lane, 24.

Santos fled from the scene. Police caught him three hours later in nearby woods. Santos has admitted he was an illegal immigrant who was **driving** his girlfriend's car and was **drunk**.

Prosecutor Alan M. Key Jr. said Santos had a blood alcohol level of .12 about six hours after the **accident**. That level meant Santos' blood alcohol was about .24 when the **crash** took place, Key told the Post-Dispatch, or three times Missouri's legal limit of .08.

Miller and Allen's mother, stepfather and father told Jamison on Thursday about the effects of the **crash** on their **lives**. Miller required spinal fusion, spends nights in pain and lost his job because of his injuries.

Allen lived with her mother, Denise Buchholz, and her stepfather, Brian Buchholz, in the 11800 block of Gold Leaf **Drive**, an unincorporated pocket of St. Louis County near Maryland Heights. They said their **lives** will never be the same.

Denise Buchholz said she had gone from planning a girls' night out with Nicole to planning her funeral.

"She looked forward to graduating from **college**, getting married and having a baby of her own," her mother told Jamison. "She never had a chance to live her dreams."

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Brian Buchholz reminisced about Nicole's help in picking out his wife's wedding ring. Both talked about sleepless nights and problems with their jobs because they have been unable to concentrate since Nicole died.

Through an interpreter, Santos said he was sorry for what had happened, that he prayed for the victim, that he had been the sole provider for his family in Mexico and that he would be unable to see his family for many years.

Once Santos completes his prison sentence in Missouri, he will be deported, authorities said.

## Graphic

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PHOTO

PHOTO - Santos Faces deportation after doing time

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