

Santa Rosa Man Sentenced to Help Family

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A judge Friday handed down a unique sentence for a 20-year-old Santa Rosa man who killed two children in a car crash, ordering him to help the victims' family heal from the tragedy.

Instead of serving time in jail, Bryan Lewis Porter will work with the family, speak to community groups and help build a memorial to the two children. The program of "restorative justice" is also intended to help Porter.

"We are going to participate in his rehabilitation," said Clara Rogers, grandmother of N'Kecia Rogers, 7, one of the victims. "We want to do something positive."

The little girl and her stepbrother, Isaiah Jones, 3, were killed in the crash on Piner Road on Sept. 4, 2003. CHP investigators said Porter was westbound in a pickup when he ran a stop sign and slammed into a car carrying the two children.

The children's parents, Marcel and Cyntina Jones of Rohnert Park, and their 9-year-old sister, Tiyana, survived the crash.

Porter, who was alone in the pickup, was unhurt.

Following a two-month investigation, Porter was charged with two counts of misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter. Prosecutors said they filed misdemeanor charges -- rather than more serious felonies -- because Porter wasn't under the influence of alcohol, nor was he speeding at the time of the crash.

Porter, a recent Piner High graduate with no prior record, said he didn't realize there was a stop sign at the intersection.

In September, he pleaded guilty to the manslaughter charges. Porter has been free on his own recognizance.

Porter could have been sentenced to two years in jail, but Superior Court Commissioner Dennis Beaman on Friday said that would do little to help the victims' family.

Instead, he approved an 18-month program that will require Porter to perform community service and work with the family.

Porter declined comment, but his attorney, Richard Scott, said his client is "truly devastated by what happened" and willingly agreed to take part.

Deputy District Attorney Troye Shaffer agreed Porter is "very remorseful."

Under the program, he will pay for family members' counseling and purchase plaques for the children's grave sites. He will also speak to school and community groups about the dangers of careless driving and will help build a memorial to the children at N'Kecia's school or Santa Rosa's Howarth Park.

The children's family helped develop the program, with assistance from a Sebastopol organization, Restorative Resources.

Scott said the children's family "was able to look beyond the tragedy that they've been through and come up with something positive." Porter, who has already met with some family members, is also receiving counseling. On Friday, he hugged N'Kecia's grandmother and told her how sorry he was, Scott said.

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