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20th Judicial Circuit

Serving Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee

For Immediate Release

May 7, 2008

Today the State Attorney's Office has reached a plea agreement in the case of State vs. Chevis Walker #06-CF18095. This involves the shooting incident on Metro Parkway in Fort Myers that occurred on February 23, 2006. It resulted in the death of Katie Knudsen and the wounding of passenger Paul Ellslager. The person who fired the fatal shots in this incident, Melvin Louis, is deceased. In June 2006 Lewis was shot and killed after an altercation at a restaurant.

The defense has demanded a speedy trial and the case was set to begin next week, May 12th. The only remaining evidence in this case balances on the victim Paul Ellslager being able to identify Chevis Walker as the individual driving the car from which Melvin Louis shot the victims. Mr. Ellslager is the sole identifying witness to Mr. Walker driving the vehicle. Chevis Walker did not make any statements implicating himself and the defense has disclosed alibi witnesses.

No one knows the whereabouts of Mr. Ellslager. The Lee Co. Sheriff's Office had ongoing contact with him but Mr. Ellslager stopped cooperating and his whereabouts are unknown. Without Ellslager, the case would be dismissed next week since we will be unable to go forward without his testimony to identify the defendant as driving the vehicle during the shooting.

The reason for this compromised resolution was discussed with the parents of the deceased, Katie Knudsen. They and we are disappointed and frustrated, but they recognize the position which has forced us to this resolution. However, by proposing a plea agreement it at least guarantees that Walker will face some punishment for his role in this crime.

The plea agreement is as follows: 28.8 months in prison (with credit for 21.3 months), followed by 5 years of probation. Walker must pay all of the court costs, probation costs, submit a DNA sample and forfeit any claim to any firearms involved in the incident. Walker is also not allowed to have any contact with Paul Ellslager.

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