

Man pleads guilty to causing deadly crash while high

By John Futtly

Dispatch.com | April 11, 2016

A 23-year-old Northeast Side man admitted today that he caused a crash, while high on marijuana, that killed a mother and her daughter and injured two others more than a year ago on Refugee Road.

Aaron S. Fields of Great Woods Boulevard pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated vehicular homicide and two counts of aggravated vehicular assault in the Jan. 30, 2015 crash.

He will be sentenced on May 4 by Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Laurel Beatty. The maximum penalty is three to 11 years for each count of aggravated vehicular homicide and one to five years for each count of aggravated vehicular assault. The sentence also will include a lifetime driver's license suspension.

Fields was driving west on Refugee Road just east of Winchester Pike when his car went across the center lane and collided with an eastbound car driven by Tanya Knipp, 32. She and her 16-year-old daughter, Tessa Knipp, died at the scene. Husband and father Rodney Knipp and another passenger, Malik Benjamin, 18, were injured.

Fields admitted that he had been smoking marijuana that day and told officers that he "blacked out" while driving, Assistant Prosecutor Keith McGrath said. A blood test found that Fields had four times the legal amount of THC, the intoxicant in marijuana, in his system, McGrath said.

Fields was driving with a temporary permit and did not have a licensed, adult driver in the car.