

State of South Carolina
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

June 27, 2012

Greenville Man Sentenced on DUI / Felony Driving Under the Influence

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins states that BILLY JOE HANNAH, age 34, pled guilty on June 26, 2012 to the charges of Felony Driving Under The Influence, resulting in Death, and Leaving the Scene of an Accident involving Death. He was sentenced by the Honorable Edward W. Miller to concurrent sentences of twenty-five years, suspended to twelve years in the South Carolina Department of Corrections on both charges. He will have to serve twelve (12) years before he becomes eligible for parole.

Evidence presented at the plea hearing by assistant solicitor Sara Lee Drawdy established that on Sunday, January 23, 2011, the defendant drove his wife's SUV off the right side of North River Rd and down a steep embankment, striking a number of trees on the way down. He fled the scene, leaving his dying passenger, James Scott Sullivan, still strapped in the passenger seat. A motorist noticed the crashed car and called 911 to report the accident. Mr. Sullivan was already deceased by the time EMS arrived. While EMS and fire department personnel were looking for the driver, whom they feared may have been ejected, troopers with the SCHP began their investigation and found that the vehicle was registered to the defendant's wife. They also found an open container of beer and a damaged milk jug that smelled strongly of some type of liquor.

At a little after 5:00 pm, a man came to the scene and told officers that the defendant, Billy Joe Hannah, (who this witness knew), had walked up to his home about one hour earlier and asked

for a ride home. Hannah's wife brought him back to the scene of the crash. Hannah smelled of alcohol, had some scrapes on his face, and told troopers that he had been driving at the time of the crash. The defendant was transported by EMS to be checked out in the emergency room. While at the hospital, a blood sample was taken from the defendant, and his blood sample was found to contain marijuana metabolites and a BAC of 0.111%.