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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 10, 2023, 12 pm**

Prince William County, VA

On July 6, 2023, the Honorable Judge James A. Willett of the Prince William County Circuit Court found Gentil Mwenze Banze guilty of DWI-Involuntary Manslaughter following his guilty plea to the charge. The Defendant will be sentenced on November 16, 2023. Members of the victim's family will present victim impact testimony at that time. The Defendant faces a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years in prison.

In the early evening hours of June 18, 2022, the Defendant, Gentil Mwenze Banze, was driving his motor vehicle westbound on Old Bridge Road. Witnesses described the Defendant's vehicle as swerving in and out of his lane of travel, almost striking other vehicles, before veering to the right and leaving the roadway. The Defendant's vehicle entered the sidewalk and struck a pedestrian, Mr. Luis Alfredo Perez, Jr., who had been out walking the family dog that evening. After the Defendant struck Mr. Perez, Jr. and his dog, he crashed into the utility pole located in the area of Cape Cod Ct, bringing down live power lines causing an audible and visible explosion on Old Bridge Rd.

Investigator Chad Mason of the Prince William County Crash Investigation Unit noted that the Defendant had an odor of alcoholic beverage coming from his person, had a slight sway to his body as he was standing, had bloodshot and watery eyes, and exhibited signs of impairment in all three standardized field sobriety tests that he attempted. The Defendant later admitted to drinking Guinness Beer prior to driving and testing later confirmed the Defendant's blood alcohol content to be 0.11g/210L of breath approximately three hours after the crash had occurred. Unfortunately, both Mr. Perez Jr. and his dog succumbed to the injuries they sustained as a result of the crash.

The Office of the Commonwealth Attorney would like to commend and thank the Prince William County Crash Investigation Unit, particularly Investigator Chad Mason, for their investigation and work that successfully resulted in a conviction in this case. In addition, the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney would like to thank Arturo Guzman, a Case Manager for the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney Victim/Witness program for the assistance he has provided to the victim's family in this case. This case was prosecuted by Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Sarah Sami.

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Amy Ashworth is the elected Commonwealth's Attorney for Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. She was elected in November 2019. The Commonwealth Attorney's Office can be reached from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. every day by phone at 703-792-6050 or email at cwoffice@pwcgov.org.

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