

Kofstad sentenced in death of friend

Dustin Kofstad, 22, Vernonia, pleaded guilty in Washington County Circuit Court to driving under the influence of intoxicants and criminally negligent homicide in the death of his passenger and friend, Robbie Baska, 22. The plea helped Kofstad avoid a possible conviction for second-degree manslaughter.

Chris Quinn, senior deputy district attorney, said the compassion of the Baska family played a large part in the state's decision to accept the plea and lesser sentence. The Baska family was not seeking

vengeance.

Kofstad was driving last June when his car went off the shoulder of Hwy. 47, and down an embankment.

Baska also of Vernonia, was in the passenger seat and received fatal injuries when the car rolled and the roof collapsed. Kofstad, then 21, had minor injuries.

Kofstad's blood-alcohol level after the accident was measured at 0.18, more than twice the legal limit.

If convicted of second-degree manslaughter and driving under the influence of intoxicants, Kofstad faced at least 75 months in prison. Acceptance of the lesser plea allowed Judge Marco Hernandez to sentence Kofstad to 36 months in prison with the option of applying for boot camp after 18 months. If accepted into boot camp, he could serve another six to eight months, according to Quinn.

During the hearing, Hernandez addressed Kofstad, who began to wipe tears from his eyes, and urged him to reflect on the effect his life and his behavior had, and will have, on others.

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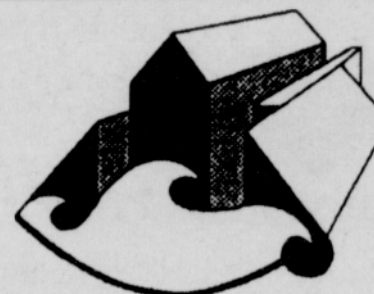
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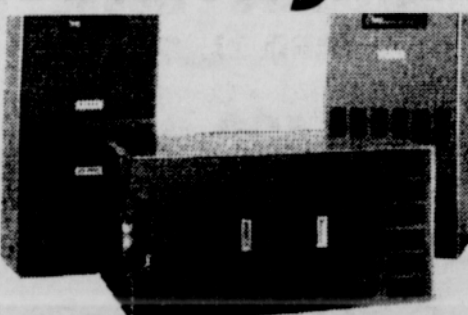
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