



## Orange County News

---

For Immediate Release  
Thursday, March 09, 2017

Contact: Christopher Borek  
845.291.3276, 845.238.4245c

### **District Attorney Hoovler, New York State Police, and Town of Crawford Police Announce Guilty Plea in Pine Bush New Years' Eve Party Homicide**

#### *Defendant Stabbed Victim to Death During Underage Drinking Party*

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced that on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, Jauntae Brown, age 20, of Spring Valley, pled guilty to one count of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, in connection with the New Years' morning stabbing death of Justin Speights at a party in the Town of Crawford. District Attorney Hoovler was joined in the announcement by Major Joseph Tripodo, commander of New York State Police Troop F; and Dominick Blasko, Chief of the Town of Crawford Police Department. Brown is expected to receive an agreed-on sentence of from five to fifteen years in prison when he is sentenced on May 15, 2017, before County Court Judge Craig Stephen Brown.

In the early morning hours of January 1, 2016, Justin Speights, who was a volunteer firefighter, and numerous other people were at a New Years' Eve party at a private residence in the Town of Crawford. Many of the partygoers were under the legal drinking age of 21. At some point during the party, a number of fights broke out. Based on the investigation of the case, it is believed that Mr. Speights was trying to break up one of those fights, when Brown stabbed him twice in the abdomen. The stab wounds ultimately resulted in Mr. Speights' death. When he pled guilty, Brown admitted that Mr. Speights was unarmed when he was stabbed, and that he did not stab Mr. Speights in self-defense.

The incident became the impetus for the Orange County Legislature's unanimous passage in February 2016 of Orange County's Social Host Law, which County Executive Steve Neuhaus signed into law and which became effective on March 17, 2016. District Attorney Hoovler originally proposed the Social Host Law, which makes it a criminal offense for adults to permit underage drinking on premises that are under their control.

District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police and the Town of Crawford Police Department for their efforts in the investigation and prosecution of the case.

“Senseless violence and alcohol frequently go together,” said District Attorney Hoovler, “and we owe it to our children and to ourselves to prevent those two things from mixing when children are involved. This case points up the tragedy that can happen when underage people are allowed to party with alcohol. As District Attorney, I have made it my mission not just to enforce the law, but to act as a force for prevention, through educating our citizens and through helping offenders obtain treatment. I will continue in those prevention efforts, so that we can avert tragedies like this in the future.”

District Attorney Hoovler highly commended Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael Milza for his prosecution of this very difficult case.

A criminal charge is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State of New York’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

###