

Haine Announces Conviction, 17-Year Sentence For Driver In Triple-Fatal Crash

by Brian Brueggemann
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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine announced Friday that a driver in a crash that claimed three lives has been convicted of aggravated intoxicated driving and sentenced to 17 years in prison.

The driver, 19-year-old Blake A. Jones of Worden, pleaded guilty Friday to three counts of aggravated driving with a blood-alcohol level 0.08 percent or more resulting in death. The charges stemmed from a crash on Aug. 13, 2021, at the intersection of Bethalto Road and McCoy Road. The crash resulted in the deaths of John A. Cafazza, 55, his wife Melissa R. Cafazza, 52, and their youngest son, Dominic Cafazza, 12, all of Bethalto.

“First and foremost, our prayers and concerns remain with the Cafazza family,” Haine said. “This is a tragedy all around. Drinking and driving destroys lives and wrecks futures. Here, a young man’s reckless choices and blatant disregard for others took three beloved lives at once, and he now faces many years in prison. There are no winners in these types of cases. Nothing can bring the dead back or undo such terrible choices.”

Haine added, “John and Melissa Cafazza epitomized what it means to be loving parents. Their son Dominic died so young but left a legacy of joy and friendship to all. There remains much healing ahead for the Cafazza family, especially the couple’s three surviving sons – whose resolve and strength of character have been particularly remarkable through this process – but we hope this guilty conviction and sentence assist that healing process.”

The three surviving Cafazza sons submitted a victim-impact statement to the court, saying no punishment could possibly make up for their loss.

“We pray that as we turn the page on this process, and begin the next chapter of our lives without them, we are able to find some peace knowing that Mr. Jones has begun serving his sentence for the devastation he has caused our family,” the surviving sons stated. Haine commended the work of the Madison County Sheriff’s Office, the Madison County Coroner’s Office, and the Metro East Crash Assistance Team for their work on the investigation.

He also specially commended the work of First Assistant State’s Attorney Chad Loughrey, who ensured that the Cafazza family was involved and informed at every stage in the process.

“We also are grateful for the emergency responders and others who rendered aid when this tragedy happened, and we thank the witnesses whose cooperation was crucial to the investigation and prosecution,” Haine said. “In addition, we sincerely appreciate the love and support demonstrated by members of the community during the Cafazza family’s time of need.”

The judge ordered that Jones be transferred to the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections to begin serving his sentence.

The cases of two co-defendants remain pending. David P. Thomae, 56, of Godfrey, and Brandon M. McKinnon, 24, of Jerseyville both are charged with permitting a violation of the Liquor Control Act, resulting in death.