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'You took my son', Wednesday May 4, 2005 USA

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Post #1

Mother lashes drunken driver

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The mother of a Greenlawn boy killed by a drunken driver who fled the scene - to another bar - lashed out in court yesterday, calling the woman a "cruel, cold, sick person."

Jeannie Belove, whose 14-year-old son, Charlie McAuliffe, was mowed down by Karin Chirichella on Oct. 16, 2004, also blasted the legal system for allowing the former LIRR conductor to serve only two years in jail.

"There is no justice here," Belove said at Chirichella's sentencing in Suffolk County court. "You took my son, and with him our hopes for his future, my grandchildren and his entire bloodline. You took a lifetime of love from his brothers and I."

After a night of drinking at a TGI Friday's in Huntington Station, Chirichella got behind the wheel of her Suzuki SUV and plowed into McAuliffe as he and two friends pedaled their bikes on Pulaski Road in Greenlawn at 1:30 a.m. Chirichella sped off and drove to another local bar, Gunther's in Northport, according to police and Belove's lawyer, Edmund Smyth.

"Gunther's refused to serve her because she was so drunk, and they called a taxi," said Smyth, adding that the taxi driver said Chirichella passed out in the backseat.

Police did not arrest the woman until nine days later after getting a tip from a body shop, Fairfield Auto Collision in Huntington Station, where Chirichella had brought her black Suzuki Grand Vitara.

Cops had been on the lookout for that type of vehicle after retrieving broken car parts at the scene.

"Look at who you took from me," Belove implored Chirichella, holding a photo of her son taken on vacation in Vermont one week before he was killed.

"This is my son. This is the boy you killed," she said. Chirichella, glancing at the photo, began sobbing.

"You murdered my son and then went to another bar," Belove continued, trembling as she read from a statement. "Tell me, did you have to clean his blood from the car?"

Through her attorney, Chirichella apologized in court.

"There are no words to express my deepest sorrow," her attorney, Rudolph Cartier, read from a statement his client wrote. "If there was some way to trade places with Charlie, I would, but I can't. All I can do is pray for him."

Chirichella pleaded guilty Feb. 28 to misdemeanor driving while intoxicated and fleeing the scene of an accident, a felony carrying a maximum four-year prison sentence.

Judge Ralph Gazzillo sentenced Chirichella to serve consecutive one-year jail terms for each charge and revoked her license for six months.

She could have faced up to seven years in prison if a proposed law now before the state legislature had been passed.

Alluding to the new law, Gazzillo said there was nothing he could do.

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"Even though a life has been taken, the Legislature has placed limits on the available sentences," he said.

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