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NEWS RELEASE
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**DA HESTRIN ANNOUNCES MURDER CHARGE FILED AGAINST
ALLEGED DRUG DEALER WHO SOLD FENTANYL-LACED DRUGS TO VICTIM**

RIVERSIDE – At a news conference held today, Feb. 22, 2021, District Attorney Mike Hestrin announced that his office has filed a second-degree murder charge against a man accused of selling fentanyl-laced drugs to a victim who overdosed and died.

Joseph Michael Costanza, DOB: 10-7-99, of Eastvale has been charged with four felonies in case RIF2100641: one count of murder; one count of sales of a controlled substance, fentanyl, to a minor (Health & Safety Code section 11353) with an enhancement of drug sales to a minor at least four years younger (H&S Code section 11353.1) and an allegation of causing great bodily injury (Penal Code section 12022.7 (a)); and two counts of possession of a controlled substance, fentanyl, for sales (H&S Code section 11351).

The victim who died in this case is Angel Vazquez, 18. The morning of Oct. 4, 2020, he was found unresponsive at a home in Eastvale. He was transported to a nearby hospital and pronounced dead about an hour later.

The 16-year-old victim listed as the victim in count two, the H&S 11353 charge, overdosed but survived and was found in the same home on the same day.

“There is no safe way to use or to sell fentanyl. Simply put, it is lethal,” DA Hestrin said. “Those who sell fentanyl should know that and, if they choose to sell it anyway and someone dies, the dealer should be prosecuted for murder.”

Costanza is scheduled to be arraigned today, Feb. 22, in Department 41 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside. If convicted as currently charged, he faces up to 17 years in prison for the drug-related counts and then would serve 15 years to life for the second-degree murder count.

The second-degree murder count has been filed as a “Watson murder”, meaning a defendant has specific knowledge that their actions were dangerous to human life, and those actions led to a person’s death.

Fentanyl is known to be an extremely dangerous and potent manmade opioid that is very lethal and potentially deadly in even very small amounts. It is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.

It only takes about two milligrams of fentanyl to potentially be lethal for most people. For perspective of how small that amount is, it takes 5,000 milligrams to make one teaspoon.

In this case, it is alleged that the defendant was aware of the danger but continued to sell the drugs, known as M30 pills. The investigation by the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department revealed that in July 2020, a woman overdosed and died at Costanza’s Eastvale home and there were several other non-fatal overdose incidents at the home.

On Feb. 11, 2021, the sheriff’s Southwest Corridor Task Force served a search warrant at Costanza’s home and seized evidence related to the selling of illegal drugs as well as M30 pills found in Costanza’s bedroom.

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