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14 years for fatal crash

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BATAVIA – A Clermont County woman was sentenced Tuesday to 14 years in prison for a car crash last fall that killed 23-month-old Ian Matthew Graves.

Diana Linz, 34, could have received up to 18 years in prison for the aggravated vehicular homicide of Ian and two charges of aggravated vehicular assault related to injuries to his mother, Christy Bishop of Milford, and her boyfriend, Lyle Sentman.

Judge Robert P. Ringland said he took into consideration that Linz entered a guilty plea Feb. 20 that spared Ian's family the trauma of having to sit through or testify in a trial.

Linz, who is pregnant, had traces of cocaine in her body on Nov. 3, when she drove a minivan through a stop sign at Woodville Pike and Deerfield Road in Miami Township. The minivan swerved to avoid other cars and crashed into a Honda Civic driven by Bishop.

Ian, who was in a child seat in the rear, had just begun to sing his favorite song – “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

In a March 16 letter to the judge, Linz acknowledged that she shouldn't have been driving that day. Her driver's license had already been suspended.

“I will never forget about the families I've hurt or stop thinking about who Ian could have been if I hadn't taken his life away. I mourn his death, and I will continue to for the rest of my life. I am so ashamed,” Linz wrote.

“Alone at night, I wake up and cry so hard for him. Soon I'll cry for my own son, who I purposefully waited 34 years for. Now, he too will suffer for my actions.”

Seated in the front row of the courtroom, Bishop, 21, began to cry before the hearing began. She had to be helped to the lectern by Assistant Prosecutor Jason Nagel to address the judge before the sentence was imposed.

In requesting the maximum sentence, Bishop said she doubted that the remorse of Linz was genuine. After the crash, as people tried to rescue Ian from the wreckage, Linz had blamed Bishop for the collision.

Instead of trying to help, Linz sat in the grass, made calls on a cell phone, drank a pop and smoked.

“Drinking Mountain Dew and smoking a cigarette – who does that?” Bishop said. “She showed our families no remorse until the day she found out she was definitely going to have to do some jail time. ...

“I beg you today to please give Diana Linz the maximum sentence for my baby's life,” Bishop said. “Ian was my hero and my best friend. He was my reason for living. ... She makes me feel as if I failed as a mommy.

“Time doesn't heal all wounds,” Bishop said. “I'll never be healed. ... Living after your baby, you're not really living. She killed more than just Ian that day. She killed a whole lot of people inside. Every day is filled with pain in our heart.”

Dozens of people in the packed courtroom wept as Bishop spoke.

Linz, who lived on McHenry Road in Goshen Township, has several previous drug convictions and 20 traffic

violations, according to the prosecutor's office.

As Linz was led off by sheriff's deputies, Bishop had to be helped out of the courtroom by her father, Mike Bishop of Amelia.

"I want my baby back," Bishop sobbed. "I want my baby back."

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