Philadelphia Woman to Spend 21 Years in Prison After Sharing Heroin With Friend Who Fatally Overdosed

July 11, 2019

July 11, 2019 -
?I should be dead as well,? Emma Semler sobbed in court as she faced the grieving family of her friend Jenny Werstler who died of an overdose after the two shared heroin. ?I don?t know why I?m still here and not Jenny.?

Semler will be spending 21 years in prison. The two young women had both struggled with devastating addictions to heroin. On Werstler?s 20th birthday back in 2014, they shot up together at a KFC in West Philadelphia. Werstler overdosed and Semler fled, abandoning her friend in the fast food restaurant?s restroom. Werstler died later that night.

Semler is now 23 and finally sober. She is also slated to spend two decades in prison for sharing what turned out to be a fatal dose of heroin with her friend. Prosecutors charged her with the distribution of heroin resulting in death, a federal statute that carries a mandatory 20-year sentence, as it was initially intended to crack down on drug dealers.

U.S. District Judge Gene E.K. Pratter sentenced her to 21 years in prison with six years of supervised release

and a $2,500 fine.

To Margaret Werstler, Jenny?s mother, this ruling was hardly a victory. She said ?There is no winning family. But they can at least visit her.?

The two girls first met at rehab in 2013. Both Werstler and Semler are from the Philadelphia suburbs. Werstler was an only child who had recently graduated from high school and worked as a manager at the burger restaurant that her family owned. Semler came from a family that had been wracked by divorce, her attorney wrote in a sentencing memo. She had developed a heroin addiction at the age of 15 after she was prescribed opiates for major spinal surgery.

By 2014, as her 20th birthday approached, Werstler was living in a halfway house in Florida. She had a scheduled court date for drug paraphernalia charges, according to her parents. The family pleaded for leniency because they were afraid that being around her old friends would threaten her hard-won sobriety. However, their appeal was rejected.

Werstler flew home for the court hearing and went out to celebrate her birthday with friends the next day. That day, May 9, 2014, Werstler contacted Semler though Facebook Messenger to ask about getting some heroin, according to prosecutors. Semler replied that she knew a place that they could go and promised to bring a syringe for Werstler.

They headed to West Philadelphia accompanied by Semler?s younger sister. Just like many other areas of the city, this place has also been heavily impacted by the opioid crisis.

Semler bought heroin from a dealer she knew and the three headed to a nearby KFC and began shooting up in the women?s restroom.

Werstler reportedly asked for a second dose because it was her birthday, then immediately began showing signs of an overdose. Semler and her sister frantically cleaned the restroom to hide evidence of their drug use instead of calling 911. They then hurried out of KFC, leaving Werstler behind.

A KFC employee later spotted Werstler?s limp body and called 911. The 20-year old died in the hospital that same day. Click the link to see Syracuse's top rehab placement programs.

A jury convicted Semler on one count of distribution of heroin resulting in death back in December 2018. And because the KFC was located within 1,000 feet of a playground, an additional count was added.

Jennifer Arbittier Williams, the first assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, said

Semler had ?acted with complete disregard for another human life, the life of a supposed friend?. She described the prosecutors? aggressive response as part of a ?multilayered approach to confronting the opioid epidemic ravaging our neighborhoods?.

Semler?s attorney, S. Philip Steinberg said in a sentencing memo that his client had ?acted in a manner that was beyond reproach by any traditional notions of societal decency?. The lawyer acknowledged Semler?s heroin addiction and said that her behavior reflected how deeply the drug had warped her mind. ?Emma Semler?s addiction does not excuse her conduct, however, it does endeavor to explain it,? he wrote.

During the sentencing hearing, Semler wept as she expressed ?extreme remorse? for Werstler?s death. She described how she had gotten sober and devoted herself to helping others shake the scourge of addiction. ?If I could go back and change anything, I would,? she said. Jenny?s mother wasn?t convinced. ?You?re only sorry for yourself,? she responded to Semler?s apology.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

###

For more information about Rehab Near Me: Syracuse, contact the company here:Rehab Near Me: Syracuse

Rehab Near Me: Syracuse

Rehab Near Me: Syracuse is Syracuse's top addiction treatment placement program for drugs, alcohol and prescription addiction cases.

Website: https://rehab-near-me-syracuse.business.site/