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Teen sentenced in DWI case

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Staff writer

A Greece teenager who drove drunk and crashed into two houses, damaging one so badly it had to be torn down, said Monday he's fortunate no one was hurt.

"I'm lucky that it wasn't worse," Brandon S. Volpe, 19, said before he was sentenced to probation, weekends of picking up trash and paying restitution for the crash on Old Edgemere Drive in Greece on April 26, 2006.

"I'm going to stay on the right side of the law. You're not going to see me back here again."

But Monroe County Assistant District Attorney Vincent Rizzo attributed the lack of injuries to more than luck.

"But for the grace of God, this would have been a much more serious situation," he said.

Acting County Court Judge Thomas Rainbow Morse ordered Volpe to serve 16 weekends on work details picking up roadside trash, spend five years on probation, attend an eight-day program for DWI offenders, and lose his driver's license for one year for his guilty plea to a felony of first-degree reckless endangerment and a misdemeanor of driving while intoxicated.

The judge also ordered restitution of \$63,033 for property damage Volpe caused. If the insurance policies covering Volpe's parents don't cover damages by Nov. 1, Volpe will repay \$2,300 a month, Morse said.

Morse also granted Volpe youthful offender status, which will seal his criminal record. As a condition of Volpe's plea and sentence, however, he is cooperating in a potential civil action by the homeowners against anyone who provided him with shots of whiskey and two 30-packs of beer.

Lisa Serio Siragusa, the property owners' lawyer, wouldn't disclose whether a lawsuit is planned, but said her clients are glad the criminal case is over.

"Despite the loss that my clients have suffered, they do believe that justice has been served," she said.

Volpe led the wrestling team at Athena High School and was Section V champion in the 140-pound weight class during his senior year in 2006.

He was drunk and traveling at more than twice the legal speed of 25 mph when his car hit two telephone poles, struck the front porch of 1005 Old Edgemere Drive, then continued into the first floor of 1007 Old Edgemere Drive.

The second house was so badly damaged that it had to be demolished.

Volpe's father, Steve Volpe, said his son is remorseful for his actions. Brandon Volpe is attending Monroe Community College and has started a car doll-up business, his father said.

"I know this boy better than anyone on Earth: his character, his energy and his love," Steve Volpe said.

"It is my opinion, he will use this as a hard lesson learned that in the end will make him better."

As part of the sentence, Morse ordered Volpe to attend a driver impact panel of DWI victims and write an essay imagining that he has been called to identify the bodies of his parents after they have been killed by a drunken driver.

The judge noted that the property owners didn't stand in the way of a lenient sentence instead of the seven-year prison term Volpe could have faced for reckless endangerment.

"Mr. Volpe, you are extremely lucky," Morse said.

"Apparently, they have chosen forgiveness and understanding and have forsaken retribution and extreme forms of punishment."

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Background

Brandon Volpe, who was three years under the legal drinking age, had a blood-alcohol content of 0.11 percent. The threshold for a drunken-driving charge is 0.08 percent.

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