

Mom called impaired in hit-run

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A Lake Grove mother of two was impaired by prescription drugs when she struck and killed a woman riding her bicycle in May and fled, a Suffolk prosecutor said yesterday.

Nicole Shellard, 32, pleaded not guilty yesterday to second-degree manslaughter and other charges in the death of Kathryn Underdown, 45, of Lake Grove.

Shellard, an occupational therapist, remains free on \$100,000 bail. She is due back in court on Sept. 15.

Underdown's husband, Michael Slovitsky, 44, said his wife, a hairdresser, had been enjoying a bike ride in Miller Place on her day off.

"Is it justice for the death of someone?" Slovitsky, a chef, said of the charges against Shellard. "There is no justice. My wife is gone."

Assistant District Attorney Ray Varuolo said Shellard was impaired by a combination of prescription drugs when she struck Underdown about 6 p.m. on May 2. She was driving her 2004 Hyundai Santa Fe east on Route 25A near Hunter Avenue.

Shellard struck another vehicle as she fled, Varuolo said. She was arrested shortly after the second crash. Prescription drug bottles were found in her car, and toxicology tests showed she had drugs in her system, he said.

Her attorney, Michael Brown of Central Islip, said Shellard had become addicted to pills she took to treat a sore back. Shellard fled because "the medication really took over and she wasn't acting rationally," he said.

Since the accident, Shellard has completed an inpatient drug treatment program and now is in a long-term residential treatment facility, Brown said.

"This is a law-abiding, educated mother of two," Brown said. "She, too, has a broken heart."

A Suffolk grand jury had handed up an 11-count indictment against Shellard, including four counts each

of second-degree vehicular manslaughter and driving while ability impaired.

Slovitsky said he and Underdown had been married five years.

"I lost half of my life," Slovitsky said. "She left a legacy of love."