

# Collision on Ohio Highway Kills 5 Members of a Family

By BOB DRIEHAUS

CINCINNATI — A woman and four children traveling home to Maryland from Michigan were killed on an Ohio highway when their minivan was struck by a pickup truck being driven the wrong way by a man whose blood-alcohol level registered three times the legal limit, the authorities said Monday.

Three other people in the van were injured in the crash Sunday night. Two of them were in critical condition.

Christmas presents were strewn among the wreckage of the minivan on Interstate 280 in Toledo, Ohio, near Interstate 75. The impact ripped away the front passenger seat and two doors, and several victims were ejected.

"To take the lives of five out of the eight family members, I would have to say that would be the worst wreck that I have ever seen," said Luis Santiago, an assistant fire chief who is a 23-year veteran of the Toledo Fire De-

partment.

The police said that several people tried to alert them about the driver of the pickup truck, identified as Michael R. Gagnon, 24, of Adrian, Mich.

The police said that Mr. Gagnon had been drinking at a bar in Oregon, Ohio, before driving to a Taco Bell. A worker there called 911 to report a drunken driver, describing a driver and truck similar to Mr. Gagnon and his Ford F-350 truck, the police said. A police officer arrived too late to stop Mr. Gagnon from entering I-280 heading north in the southbound lanes.

A driver heading south also called the police to report a truck speeding past in the wrong direction, moments before the authorities said Mr. Gagnon rounded a curve and struck the minivan.

The crash killed Bethany Griffin, 36, of Parkville, Md.; her infant daughter, Vadi Griffin, eight weeks; her stepdaughter Jordan Griffin, 10; and her daughters,



LORI KING/THE TOLEDO BLADE, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lacie Burkman, 7, and Haley Burkman, 10. Ms. Griffin's husband, Danny Griffin Jr., 36, was in critical condition in intensive care on Monday. His 8-year-old daughter, Sidney Griffin, was in stable condition. Ms. Griffin's 8-year-old son, Beau Burkman, was in critical condition.

Chief Santiago said Mr. Gag-

non was belligerent toward hospital workers before being treated for minor injuries. After the police obtained a search warrant, medical workers drew Mr. Gagnon's blood, which registered an alcohol level of 0.254 percent, more than three times Ohio's 0.08 percent legal limit.

Mr. Gagnon was charged Mon-

day with aggravated vehicular homicide.

The scene of the accident was unsettling, even for seasoned emergency workers, Chief Santiago said. "I can only imagine what the families are going through," he said. "I know our first responders and medics had a hard time with this."

The aftermath of a crash involving a minivan and a pickup truck headed the wrong direction on a highway in Toledo, Ohio. The truck's driver was charged with aggravated vehicular homicide.