

Authorities Release ID of Belleville Teen Who Apparently Committed Suicide by Ingesting Cleaning Products

By Jacqueline Lee, Belleville News-Democrat

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Belleville, IL – A Belleville teen died Wednesday in an apparent suicide after ingesting a liquid mixture of household cleaning products in one of the first reported cases of chemical suicide in the metro-east.

Russel A. Mueller, 18, was pronounced dead at 9:30 p.m. by St. Clair County Chief Deputy Coroner Dan Haskenhoff. Mueller was found in his vehicle in the parking lot of Southwestern Illinois College.

He was studying math and science at SWIC, and would have graduated in December, said his father, Russel C. Mueller. He was a member of honor society Phi Theta Kappa and was on the honor roll.

"I wish everybody knew him," Russel C. Mueller said of his son. "He was an exceptional person, a kind person, very good at art. I was very proud of him."

The teen always did his best at whatever he did, but was "somewhat despondent," the senior Mueller said.

"It's unfortunate that sometimes these things happen with young kids," Mueller said. "He will surely be missed. I want people to keep him in their prayers."

Mueller ingested a variety of toxic chemicals that could be found in a grocery store, Haskenhoff said Thursday. The toxic mixture was in liquid form, but officials were concerned it had taken a toxic gas form.

Haskenhoff said it's the first such case he has dealt with.

Chemical suicide, or detergent-related suicide, has increased in popularity abroad in recent years and more cases are starting to appear in the United States. It involves mixing household chemicals to produce a poisonous gas.

Toxicology reports are pending, and the cause of his death appeared to be suicide by asphyxiation, Haskenhoff said.

There was no foul play, he said.

Campus security found Mueller about 7:30 p.m. in the back seat of his vehicle in the parking lot of the college near the MetroLink station, Haskenhoff said.

Mueller's body was covered by a blanket and was on a pillow. He had left a note.

Police called in the St. Clair County Hazardous Materials Operations Team, operated by the St. Clair Special Emergency Services Association, because a potentially hazardous substance was found in the vehicle.

Police cleared the scene about 10:45 p.m. after the team collected and secured the toxic substance, which was contained to the vehicle.

Mueller is survived by his parents and two siblings.

Read more: <http://www.bnd.com/2010/05/06/1245976/authorities-release-id-of-belleville.html#ixzzOnFFwMJIG>

HazMat Team Responds to SWIC after Apparent Suicide in Parking Lot

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Belleville, IL – Emergency personnel responded Wednesday night to an apparent suicide in the parking lot of Southwestern Illinois College, and blocked off the area because a potentially hazardous substance was found in the vehicle with the body.

Police cleared the scene about 10:45 p.m. after the St. Clair County Hazardous Materials Operations Team collected and secured the unidentified toxic substance. Police initially responded about 7:30 p.m.

Police found an unidentified substance in the vehicle, and activated the team to determine whether any cleanup was necessary, Belleville Police Capt. Don Sax said.

"My understanding, from what I heard, is it's contained to the vehicle," Sax said.

Police did not release the identity of the person, how the body was discovered or whether the person was a SWIC student.

The site is near the SWIC MetroLink station, but service to the train was never interrupted.

Source: <http://www.bnd.com/2010/05/05/1244604/hazmat-team-responds-to-swic-after.html#ixzzOnFEjI2cq>