

9/8/2010

# Alcohol incident now a death investigation

**HARLAN** -- A 17-year-old Harlan teenager died Monday, Oct. 11 as a result of injuries sustained in an alcohol incident over the weekend.

Julio Caceres died Monday afternoon at the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, confirmed a hospital spokesperson. The Iowa Department of Public Safety said this week autopsy results revealed that Caceres died of gastric aspiration attributable to alcohol intoxication.

Caceres had originally been taken to Myrtle Medical Center in Harlan at approximately 1 a.m. Saturday morning, Oct. 9 by other teenagers who found him unresponsive. He was later transferred to the Omaha hospital, and was in a coma for nearly three days before he died.

The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation has been called in to investigate the death. In a statement released Monday, the DCI said the incident appeared to be alcohol related. The prelimi-

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Julio Caceres

nary investigation indicates that Caceres and several other teenagers were drinking alcohol inside a Harlan residence. Caceres became unresponsive and was driven to the hospital by a few of the teenagers present at the residence.

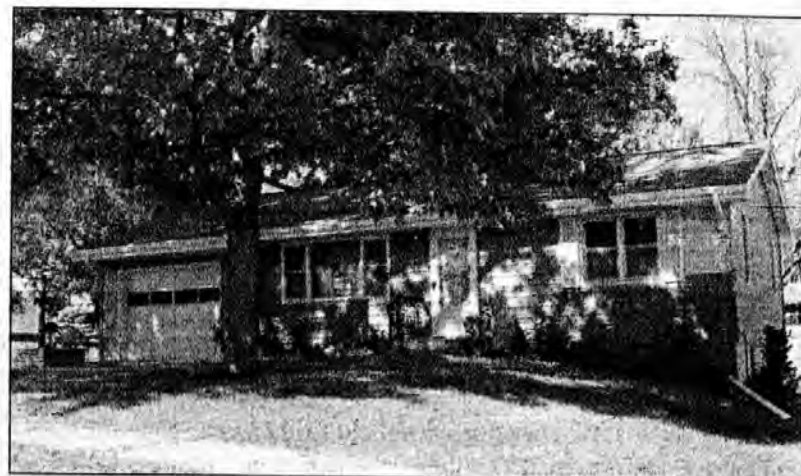
Further investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident continues.

The Iowa Department of Public Safety reported this week that the incident occurred at 1626 Victoria St. in Harlan. Upwards of 30 youth were alleged to be at a party that night at the home.

Services for Julio Caceres will be Saturday, Oct. 16. A memorial/visitation will be from 2-9 p.m. at the Huebner and Sons Funeral Home in Denison, 1437 Broadway, across from the downtown Hy-Vee. Donations may be made to Julio's memorial at that time. Caceres will be buried in El Salvador, where his family is from.



Caceres was a senior student at Harlan Com-



The Iowa Department of Public Safety said this home, 1626 Victoria St. in Harlan, was where 17-year-old Julio Caceres was found unresponsive due to alleged alcohol poisoning. He later died at a Nebraska hospital. It is not yet confirmed who is living in the residence. (Photo by Bob Bjoin)

community High School, who had lived with Harlan Police Chief Frank Clark and enrolled in the school district just this year. His mother and many family members still live in Denison, where Caceres lived and went to school for about six years before transferring to Harlan.

School officials at Harlan Community said he was a good student and well liked.

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## Death *from front page*

"He was good in the classroom and good at soccer," said superintendent of schools Justin Wagner. He had moved to town to get a fresh start. "He kind of bounced around...he didn't really have a family here in town."

Students showed their support for Caceres via a Facebook page entitled "Prayers for Julio." As of early Tuesday following his death, there were more than 380 showing their support for Caceres and his family. A similar Facebook discussion group was developed later in the week allowing students to share their thoughts on Caceres' death.

School officials activated their crisis response team this week after hearing of the incident over the weekend. Students and staff were notified of the initial incident as well as Caceres' death, and staff

was available to students who wished to talk about the events.

The alcohol incident is the second in as many weekends involving HCHS students. On the weekend of October 2-3, a number of students were ticketed for minor in possession of alcohol following an underage drinking party bust in Avoca. Others who weren't ticketed that night fled the scene as law enforcement arrived.

Wagner said the school district has been proactive the last few years in its attempt to encourage students to make proper choices. The district has implemented the Character Counts initiative, has begun breathalizing at all school dances, is working to bring a drug dog into the school building and has brought in numerous speakers to advise students against making destructive decisions.

The district's SADD (Stu-

dents Against Destructive Decisions) chapter met this week and will get advice from the national organization on what more it can do. Student organizations at HCHS are planning to meet as a group to discuss how they can address the alcohol and other destructive behaviors.

With the death of a student this week, Wagner is encouraging parents and the community to also step up and take action.

"We need the adults in the community to stand up and do the right thing," Wagner said. "It is the collective responsibility of the adults in the community to do the

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## Memorial/Visitation Services

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The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation is working the case, and there's the likely possibility that charges will be filed in Caceres' death, although no charges were filed as of early Thursday morning.

Officials said hopes are that those responsible for supplying alcohol will step forward and do the right thing.

"It might not be the easiest thing, but it's the right thing to do," Wagner said. Additional charges involving minors and/or others also are a possibility.

Anyone with information about the case should contact Jacqueline Montagne with the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation at 712-252-0507.

