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Published June 10th, 2009

Orinda Police Still Investigating Teen's Death

By Lee Borrowman

There have been no further arrests in the case involving the May 23 death of 16-year-old Joseph Loudon. The Miramonte High School student died of apparent alcohol poisoning after attending a party. Shortly thereafter police arrested two suspects, 18 year-old Patrick Gabrielli, the party's host, and an unidentified 16 year-old male who is suspected of bringing alcohol to the party. Police charged the two with contributing to the delinquency of a minor and giving alcohol to a minor. Many of the initial questions have been answered, according to Orinda Police Chief Bill French, but police are seeking additional witnesses to help them fill in details of the events of that evening.

"We are trying to find and interview more of them (the teenage guests)... there were fifty to sixty people there that night, but we've been able to talk to only a few and they have not provided very much information," French said last week. (Loudon's mother, Marianne Payne, has written an open letter to the Orinda community asking witnesses to come forward; read it in our Public Forum on page 6.)

Although French said it did not appear that there was anyone of legal drinking age at the party, a keg of beer and a large quantity of hard liquor was found in the home at which the party was held.

"We were able to trace the keg; we know who purchased it and where," stated French. "There was also hard alcohol that was purchased that afternoon," he continued, but would not identify the suspect due to his age and the on-going investigation.

French would not name the establishments, but confirmed "some of the alcohol was purchased in Alameda County, and some was purchased in the Lamorinda area." Police are working with the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to investigate the businesses involved.

The case has not yet been forwarded to the District Attorney. "We are waiting for the toxicology report (part of the autopsy that was performed on Loudon). Those results will be very important to this case," says French, and they will be available in a few weeks."

Reach the reporter at: lee@lamorindaweekly.com

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