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Published July 22nd, 2009

Coroner's Report Released in Death of Orinda Teen

By Lee Borrowman

According to the Contra Costa County forensic pathologist's report, 16-year old Joseph Loudon died of "asphyxia, due to aspiration of gastric contents due to alcohol and papaverine ingestion," Sherriff's Department spokesman Jimmy Lee announced on Wednesday, July 15.

Orinda Police responded to a home on Hillcrest Drive in Orinda the night of May 23, after receiving a report that a young man who was intoxicated and unresponsive at a teenage party. Loudon was transported to Kaiser Hospital in Walnut Creek where he was pronounced dead.

Although police initially suspected alcohol poisoning to be the cause of Loudon's death, the forensic pathologist found that Loudon's blood alcohol level was "very low." However, there was a high level of papaverine present.

Loudon's blood alcohol level was .03, according to Orinda Police Chief William French. As a frame of reference, it is illegal for an adult to drive with a blood alcohol level of .08 or higher.

Papaverine is a prescription opiate which acts as a vasodilator,

relaxing veins and arteries to increase blood flow. An older

drug, its effectiveness has been questioned. It is used to treat certain coronary conditions as well as spasms of the intestinal and urinary tract; it is sold under the brand names Pavabid and Vasal and is also available generically. Papaverine's side effects can include nausea and abdominal distress, and patients taking papaverine are warned to use caution when consuming alcohol.

Papaverine is not known as a recreational drug and French said he had never seen it used as such. He also stated that Loudon did not have any prescriptions for medication. At this time, police are unsure how Loudon obtained papaverine.

Three arrests have been made in this case to date; 18-year Patrick Gabrielli, who hosted the party and a 16-year old male were arrested on suspicion of providing alcohol to and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Robert Martin Scott of Rohnert Park was arrested on suspicion of forgery and identity theft after several Miramonte High School students were found to have fake IDs. Police said they found about 100 fake driver licenses in Scott's home.

"This case remains a priority for the Orinda Police Department," stated French. Although the Orinda Police have received dozens of calls with information regarding the case, French encouraged anyone who might have additional information to come forward.

Andrea A. Firth contributed to this article

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