

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

[Click here for a printer friendly version of this article.](#)

The Gazette (Cedar Rapids-Iowa City)

October 29, 1996

Section: A

Edition: Final

Page: 1

Iowa City woman's death suspicious

Investigators say foul play suspected

Lyle Muller and Lynn M. Tefft Gazette Johnson County Bureau

IOWA CITY - Investigators suspect foul play in the death of Laura Van Wyhe, an Iowa City child-care provider who was found barely alive early Saturday along a northern Missouri highway. A truck driver found Van Wyhe at about 1:50 a.m. Saturday - three days after her 21st birthday - along U.S. Highway 136 near Kahoka, Mo.

Van Wyhe had suffered multiple injuries, said Clark County Sheriff Don Barry. He would not elaborate.

Van Wyhe, of 1026 E. Washington St., died at 4:40 a.m. in a Quincy, Ill., hospital.

"Foul play is suspected," Barry said Monday.

Missouri Highway Patrol troopers said Van Wyhe may have been hit by a car, but the accident likely did not occur where she was found.

Anyone driving between Kahoka, Mo., and Medill, Mo., between 11:59 p.m. Friday and 2 a.m. Saturday, is asked to call the Clark County sheriff's office at (816) 727-2911.

Barry said Van Wyhe was found about three-tenths of a mile west of where Highway 136 intersects Highway 81. He declined comment on whether the car Van Wyhe was driving was nearby when she was found.

Van Wyhe had a 14-month-old son, Samson. The child's father, Donald Knight III of Iowa City, could not be reached for comment.

Van Wyhe's grandmother, Virginia Van Wyhe of Pella, said Laura had gone to visit Knight's sister, Rebecca Knight, in Bonaparte on Saturday.

A person answering the phone at the Knight home in Bonaparte, a southern Iowa community in Van Buren County, said Van Wyhe had arrived around 8 p.m. Friday and planned to stay until Sunday. She was there to celebrate her birthday, he said.

He said he didn't know what led Van Wyhe to Missouri that night.

Van Wyhe was a licensed child-care provider who worked at her home, where she lived with her mother, Leanne Jonker Thomas. Thomas and Van Wyhe's stepfather, John F. Thomas, declined comment.

Susan Petevis, of 4Cs-Community Coordinated Child Care of Iowa City, said Van Wyhe was a nurturing, conscientious person.

"I would trust her any day with my children," said Petevis, who heads the food program at 4Cs, a resource for local child-care providers.

She said Van Wyhe frequently checked with the center on questions about nutrition and child-care legal requirements.

"She had a lot of goals about wanting to be home with her child and have an income," Petevis said. "This was going to be her business, and she was going to do it all right."

Van Wyhe's grandmother, Virginia Van Wyhe of Pella, characterized her granddaughter as a delightful person.

"She had no problem at all with anybody," she said. She said she'd last talked with her granddaughter on Wednesday, to wish her a happy birthday.

Jerry Arganbright, principal at West High School in Iowa City, said Van Wyhe attended West from 1988 to 1992 before transferring to Community Education Center, the school district's alternative high school.

"She was an outstanding student academically and very nice to be around," Arganbright said.

Van Wyhe's father, William Van Wyhe of Tacoma, Wash., could not be reached.

(See obituary, page 2B.)

FYI A memorial fund has been established in memory of Laura Van Wyhe. Donations may be made at any First National Bank Iowa City location or mailed to Patrick Gordon, P.O. Box 1880, Iowa City, IA 52244.

Illustration: COLOR PHOTO

COLOR MAP

GAZETTE MAP

Laura Van Wyhe Iowa City woman found barely alive, with multiple injuries

WOMAN FOUND FATALLY INJURED

Copyright (c) 1996, 2000 Cedar Rapids Gazette