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LOCAL NEWS

Teen struck, killed by train

By Kristina Arvanitis / Staff Writer
Wednesday, November 19, 2003

Tragedy hit the Winchester High School community Sunday afternoon when a student was struck and killed by an Amtrak train while walking along the railway on Cross Street.

Anthony Fernandes, 16, was pronounced dead at Winchester Hospital at 1:08 p.m. Since Fernandes was not carrying identification on him at the time of the accident, he was not officially identified by authorities until early Monday morning.

According to Lt. Det. James Pierce, the incident was ruled as a multiple-trauma accidental death by the medical examiner at the hospital.

Fernandes was reportedly walking on the southbound track near the Cross Street bridge area when an Amtrak Downeaster train bound for Portland, Maine traveling north on the southbound tracks struck him at approximately 12:30 p.m. Pierce noted that work was being done on the northbound tracks and the train had been rerouted to tracks on the other side in order to complete the trip.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority spokesperson Joe Pesaturo said the train's engineer told authorities that he sounded his horn when he saw the teenager walking on the tracks, but that he was not able to alert Fernandes in time to avert the collision. The case is still under investigation by MBTA police, but Pesaturo said they have ruled out any possibility of foul play in Fernandes' death.

"It's very rare that something like this will happen," Pesaturo said. "The engineer sounded his whistle and [Fernandes] moved over to the side of the tracks, but unfortunately not enough."

According to Pesaturo and police reports, the accident on Cross Street was the second local train accident on Sunday. At approximately 6:30 p.m. that evening, a Woburn man was struck by a commuter train while he was walking near the tracks at the Mishawum Station in his hometown. He reportedly suffered a severed arm, but was rushed to Massachusetts General Hospital, where he underwent surgery to reattach the arm.

A community reacts

School officials noted that measures are being taken to console students at WHS, where

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Fernandes was a ninth-grader, after having transferred from a vocational-technical school earlier in the year. Superintendent of Schools Jim Marini said that staff, counselors and parents are always ready to pitch in when needed to deal with a tragedy and that a note detailing the incident was sent home with all students.

"Our crisis team is well-trained. It's just unfortunate that we have to use it," Marini said.

WHS Principal Tom Gwin said that Fernandes was a well-liked student and that counseling services were available at three areas of the school on the day after Fernandes' death. St. Mary's Parish was also helping out at the school, and Gwin said a small group of students were able to spend the day at the church.

"He was very well-liked by both teachers and students and some of the kids here are having a very difficult time dealing with it," Gwin said.

According to Sal Caraviello, director of youth ministries for St. Mary's, the mood at WHS was somber and students expressed sadness and confusion at Fernandes' death.

On Tuesday, about 50 students expressed interest in attending a memorial service for their late classmate in order to grieve and keep his memory alive. Caraviello also remarked that the youth in town have dealt with several losses in the past year, including the sudden death of WHS 11th grader Chris Mitropoulos last January.

"It's been a difficult time period for the kids in town, but the one good thing is that the community and the teens are able to pull together and show love and support in these tough times," Caraviello said.

Fernandes' family could not be reached for comment at press time.

Prayer services in honor of Fernandes were held at St. Mary's on Tuesday evening and funeral services are scheduled for later in the week.

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