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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

December 19, 2002, Thursday, BC cycle

High school student dies after shooting accident

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 166 words

DATELINE: LOVELAND, Colo.

An 18-year-old high school student died after an accident while target shooting with friends, authorities said.

Randal Williams Jr. was with three other students shooting into a hillside in the Carter Lake area on Wednesday, Larimer County sheriff's spokeswoman Eloise Campanella said. Witnesses told deputies that Williams fumbled his .22-caliber handgun, causing it to discharge about 2:15 p.m.

Williams suffered a gunshot wound to the chest. He was taken to McKee Medical Center in Loveland, where he died in surgery at 3:30 p.m.

Sheriff Jim Alderden said an autopsy would be done Thursday, but said authorities have every reason to believe the shooting was "a very unfortunate accident."

Students **Christopher Nikkel** and David Rusho, both 18, and a juvenile female whose name wasn't released were with Williams when he was shot, Campanella said. The shooting occurred outside Nikkel's home.

Williams was a Johnstown resident and a student at Thompson Valley High School.

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Fort Collins Coloradoan

December 19, 2002 Thursday

Thompson Valley student killed in shooting accident

BYLINE: Sarah Langbein, Coloradoan staff, SarahLangbein@coloradoan.com

Thompson Valley student killed in shooting accident Fort Collins Coloradoan
December 19, 2002 Thursday

SECTION: LOCAL; Pg. 1B

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An 18-year-old Thompson Valley High School student accidentally shot and killed himself while target shooting Wednesday.

Randal Williams Jr. sustained a .22 caliber semi-automatic gunshot wound to the chest at his friend's home, just north of Carter Lake, Larimer County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Eloise Campanella said.

Authorities were called at 2:15 p.m.

Williams, a Johnstown resident, was taken to McKee Medical Center in Loveland, where he died in surgery at 3:30 p.m.

Williams was target shooting with three other TVHS students at 3201 Cactus Court in Loveland, the home of 18-year-old **Christopher Nikkel**, Campanella said.

"They were doing it really safely," Campanella said. "They were shooting into a hillside."

Nikkel, 18-year-old David Rusho and an unidentified female witnessed the shooting and said Williams fumbled the gun before it discharged.

Deputies found the . 22 caliber handgun and two rifles at the scene. Campanella did not know to whom the weapons were registered.

An autopsy is scheduled for today at McKee Medical Center to determine the cause of death.

"After the autopsy, we will determine whether the evidence matches up with witness statements," Sheriff Jim Alderden said in a written statement. "However, at this time, we have every reason to believe this was a very unfortunate accident."

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Fort Collins Coloradoan

October 13, 2001 Saturday

Teen's family may sue over arrest

BYLINE: Jenn Farrell, Coloradoan staff, JennFarrell@coloradoan.com

Teen's family may sue over arrest Fort Collins Coloradoan October 13, 2001
Saturday

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LENGTH: 710 words

Nikkels claim attempted murder charge was excessive

The family of a teen-ager who pleaded guilty to running over a Larimer County sheriff's deputy during a fracas at the family's Carter Lake home has filed a "notice of claim" with the county, the precursor to a lawsuit.

In the notice, the family of **Christopher Nikkel** claims two Larimer County sheriff's deputies violated their constitutional rights by "surreptitiously" coming onto their property April 7 and using excessive force against the teen-ager.

The notice gives a claim of \$10 million. Tom Metier, the Nikkel's attorney, said that number was chosen as an upper limit for possible damages.

The notice of claim includes damages for physical and emotional harm, fear, anxiety, loss of reputation, loss of income, past and future medical expenses, and attorneys fees.

"We want to send a message, and law enforcement has to get that message, that you cannot misuse the system and overcharge kids and adults," said B.J. Nikkel, mother of **Christopher Nikkel**.

Initially, **Christopher Nikkel** was charged with attempted murder in the case. B.J. Nikkel said the charge was excessive because her son did not intend to hurt anyone and was not driving fast enough to cause serious injuries.

Both the deputies involved in the incident were cleared of wrongdoing, said Larimer County Sheriff Jim Alderden.

Deputies were looking for a runaway juvenile on April 7 when a man told them about an underage party at the Nikkel's home, 3201 Cactus Court. Deputies parked their car down the road and walked up to the house.

While they were approaching, the man to whom deputies had spoken called the house to warn that the police were coming. As deputies Joseph Shellhammer and Richard Wages approached, several juveniles were leaving the house.

As **Christopher Nikkel** drove down the driveway, his Subaru station wagon hit Shellhammer and then headed toward Wages. Shellhammer and Wages both shot at and hit the car. Its driver and two occupants were not injured.

Christopher Nikkel, who turned 17 in September, pleaded guilty in May to second-degree assault on a peace officer and vehicular eluding. He was sentenced to two years probation, 48 hours of community service and 10 days at the Platte Valley Youth Services Center in Greeley.

B.J. Nikkel said her son did not see Shellhammer and didn't recognize that the police were at his home. The deputies parked a block away and approached the home through a field in a "stealthy" manner, she said.

"We feel that, in this case, law enforcement clearly helped create the situation

Teen's family may sue over arrest Fort Collins Coloradoan October 13, 2001
Saturday

that occurred that night at our house," B.J. Nikkel said.

She said that Shellhammer stepped in front of her son's car with a flashlight, blinding the youth.

Law enforcement officers should not draw their weapons when they know that it's a bunch of high school kids they're approaching to look for a runaway, Metier said.

"What were they going to do, shoot her (the runaway)?" Nikkel said.

Nikkel said it's scary that sheriff's deputies shot at a car full of teen-agers.

"It should scare everyone who lives in Larimer County," she said.

"It's not open season on teen-agers in this county," Metier said.

But Alderden said his deputies responded properly to the situation.

"Deputies Wages and Shellhammer used deadly force allowed under Colorado statutes," Alderden said. "It was very clear that they had identified themselves as peace officers."

The deputies approached the home with their flashlights on, he said.

Christopher Nikkel admitted to the offense - a violent felony, Alderden said.

B.J. Nikkel said her son entered into the plea agreement to avoid being charged as an adult.

Larimer County attorney George Hass said he had not yet seen the notice of claim and did not have a comment.

Just because a notice of claim has been filed does not mean a lawsuit will result, Metier said. The county has 90 days in which to conduct its own investigation and take action, he said.

Based on what the county does, he said, the Nikkels could decide to file a lawsuit or take other action. He declined to comment on what other action might be taken.

"Ensuring proper training for law enforcement and that quality people are hired is paramount," Nikkel said.

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