

Man dies from injuries from being hit by car in downtown Santa Rosa

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THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Published: Sunday, April 24, 2011 at 8:00 p.m.

A 63-year-old transient died late Saturday from injuries suffered when he was hit by a car last week in downtown Santa Rosa — the fourth pedestrian to be killed while crossing a Sonoma County street since December.

Joseph Dailey was hit at 9:50 p.m. last Monday by driver Vanessa Pritchard, 28, of Santa Rosa, police said. He was walking south on Mendocino Avenue and had begun to cross Fifth Street when he was hit, police said.

Police late last week still were trying to determine exactly how the incident occurred.

"We're hoping that somebody saw it," Lt. Ben Harlin said. "We need to corroborate stories, and we need an independent witness to do that."

The three other pedestrians killed recently were a 2-year-old Rohnert Park girl who was walking with her mother, who herself was seriously injured; an 83-year-old Cloverdale man; and a 24-year-old Santa Rosa skateboarder.

Word of Dailey's death spread Sunday at an Easter lunch at a west Santa Rosa shelter where he'd lived off-and-on for years.

"J was a character," said Mark Crow, staff with Catholic Charities' Samuel L. Jones Hall shelter. "He was a solid person. Even when he was having a bad day, he'd make you smile."

Known as "J" or "Joe," Dailey was a Fourth Street regular who wore his long white hair in a ponytail and opted for skirts instead of pants, his friends said.

Crow spoke to a somber group gathered in the shelter's Finley Avenue dining hall to share a chicken feast. Dailey was the sixth former shelter resident to have died since January, staff members said.

"It's motivated me so deeply to do better for myself," resident Tamara Hernandez, 46, said. "Easter is about death and rebirth."

Hernandez created a memorial display with the names of the dead on a wall decorated with yellow ribbon, candles and leafy arrangements.

Among those memorialized was Steven Newell, 41. Santa Rosa police said he was found dead April 9 after falling 30 feet off a bridge at Farmers Lane and Highway 12. Detectives still were trying to determine whether he fell, jumped or was pushed.

Anyone with information about last Monday's collision involving Dailey should call the Santa Rosa police traffic unit at 543-3636.



(BETH SCHLANKER/ The Press Democrat)
(From right) Mardell Stickley, Susan Teague and Stephanie Furtado, a case manager, remember those in the local homeless community who have died since January, including accident victim Joseph Dailey, during a barbeque at Samuel L. Jones Hall in Santa Rosa on Sunday, April 24, 2011.

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