

Livonia woman charged in drunk-driving death

A Livonia man riding his motorcycle was killed late Wednesday when he was struck by a woman leaving a Westland bowling alley in her pickup truck, police said.

Kevin Perry, 39, died on route to St. Mary Hospital in Livonia from blunt force injuries he received during the 11:38 p.m. accident that happened on Wayne Road north of Ford, in front of Westland Bowl.

Perry was driving his 2001 Honda Shadow north on Wayne when he was struck by a 2001 Ford Ranger driven by 26-year-old Livonia resident Emily Yvonne Coombs, who, police said, was legally drunk with a .14 blood alcohol level.

"She just pulled out," Westland police officer Jack McIntosh said.

Coombs was arraigned Friday

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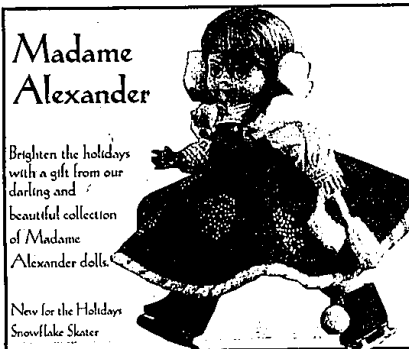
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Perry from page A1

the family's life had just begun to settle into a routine. Kevin's mother and father moved in as well.

"He was just so thrilled they got that house," Lori said. "He worked so hard to get them into that house."

Now Lori, her parents, sister and brother-in-law are trying to figure out how they can keep the children in that house and save Kevin's dream for his family.

Tough times

Lori said she'd never seen her brother so excited as he'd been in the past few months. A hard worker, he always made time for his children, who in turn adored him. No matter what they were doing, the two youngest boys would always know when Dad got home from work.

"They knew the sound of his car door," Lori said. "He was never too tired to spend time with his kids. He did everything for them."

Kevin invited his mother to live with him after she'd suffered a near-fatal bout of pneumonia last year. Their apartment was on the second floor; when she was unable to walk, he carried her up and down the stairs so that she could get some fresh air outdoors.

Even though their parents were divorced, Kevin and his sisters also persuaded their father to move out of a small trailer

and into the new house.

"He was something else," Lori said of Kevin, her voice laden with tears.

This is the second time the family has lost a loved one to a drunk driver. Kevin's uncle was killed at the age of 35. Though it was years ago, Lori still remem-

'Any comfort in this is coming from seeing what people do in times of need. We've gotten hugs from people...they have no idea how much that means. People ask us what to do, we tell them just to pray for the kids.'

Lori Booth
—Sister—

bers the devastating effects on her grandparents.

She said Kevin's children — three boys and a girl — are dealing with the loss "really well."

His oldest son wants to take over his father's jobs and support the family.

"It's all he talks about," Lori said.

Kindness

The family has been overwhelmed by the support and assistance they've already received. Extended family members have helped with funeral expenses. Friends and former co-workers brought food "enough to feed an army," Lori said, adding,

"The schools have been unbelievably cooperative."

She said staff members at Small World Daycare, which has provided care for the two youngest children, have also gone out of their way to help. Knowing the boys' love for Red Wings hockey, they've tried to

get them tickets to a game or autographed photos of their favorite players in time for Christmas — which will be a very difficult time.

"The 7-year-old asked me 'How will Daddy get the rest of our presents under the tree?'" Lori said in a voice choked with emotion. "The hardest thing I've ever had to do is try to explain this to a 5-year-old."

What's helped most has been the outpouring of love the family has witnessed since news of Kevin's death spread.

"Any comfort in this is coming from seeing what people do in times of need. We've gotten hugs

from people...they have no idea how much that means. People ask us what to do, we tell them just to pray for the kids."

What next?

The family has just begun to assess their situation. All the insurance Kevin had will barely cover his funeral expenses. They've had to borrow money for up-front costs, including flowers for the service.

Keeping the house poses the biggest challenge, but there are other concerns, especially with the holidays at hand. Growing boys tend to go through jeans pretty quickly, and Kevin had planned to buy the younger boys clothes for Christmas.

Lori said the family wants to do everything possible to give the boys what their father wanted them to have. Whatever they can scrape together at this point will be used to provide for the kids, she said.

"That's everybody's goal, keeping the boys in the house. We just want to stick to the plans he had for them."

* Anyone wishing to help Kevin Perry's family may contact the Observer, 248-477-5450, Jane Andrews at Small World Day Care Center, 248-477-1900 or Lori Booth, 248-473-4098.

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by Josephine Finazzo, D.M.D.

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