

# Crash victim mourned

## Granddaughter loved little kids, Hills woman says

By CHRIS MCCOSKY  
STAFF WRITER

On the day 20-year-old Devanie Pacholek was buried, the moral and legal issues surrounding her death last Friday were insignificant, almost irrelevant.

As friends and family gathered Monday at the Schrader-Howell Funeral Home in Plymouth, the focus was not drinking and driving, or Windsor's lower drinking age, or even the ongoing criminal investigation of the head-on collision on the Ambassador Bridge that killed Pacholek and a 26-year-old Windsor resident.

"The focus was on a loving and beloved young woman whose passions were music, animals and children. A woman whose life ended before she could figure out the exact shape and direction she wanted it to go.

**Always smiling**  
"We were going through photographs of Devanie, trying to decide which ones to display with the closest casket," said Dennis

Savage, Devanie's father. "She is smiling in every one. And it's not like I had to wait to capture the moment. She was always smiling."

Pacholek grew up in Canton Township. Savage and her mother, Dianne, were divorced. She lived in Canton with her mother until she was 18, then moved in with her father. She graduated from Livonia Churchill High School.

She was a student at Schoolcraft Community College and worked for Plymouth veterinarian Kevin Roost.

"She really loved little kids," said Marilyn Pacholek of Farmington Hills, Devanie's grandmother. "She has a new baby brother (Trey, six months) and a younger brother (Damon, 10) and a sister (Mallory, 8), that she spent a lot of time with. She talked about wanting to work with kids."

Pacholek and three others were driving home from a bar in Windsor at about 1 a.m. Friday. The 1990 Ford Escort, driven by 20-

year-old Kristen Hughes of Westland, apparently crossed the center line on the Ambassador Bridge and crashed head-on into a 1979 Ford Mustang.

Pacholek and Lisa Richardson, a passenger in the Mustang, were killed. Hughes, 20-year-old Theodora Nankin and the driver of the Mustang, Dennis Haralson, 25, of Taylor, were critically injured. Larry Lantgios of Plymouth, the fourth passenger in Hughes' car, was treated and released.

### Investigation continues

Police were still investigating the accident Monday. They suspect that alcohol was involved. Although, according to Dennis Savage, neither Pacholek nor Lantgios were drunk.

"The boy (Lantgios) came to my house and tried to explain everything to me," Savage said. "He said he had his alcohol level tested and it came up to the equiv-

alent of one beer. He said nobody knew that Kristen was drunk. She did not appear drunk. We're wondering if maybe she just wasn't used to driving such a small car on that bridge."

As for Devanie, both Savage and Marilyn Pacholek say she was an extremely light drinker.

"It's always been OK for her to drink if she wanted to," Savage said. "It was always OK with us because she always used good judgment. On her graduation day she had a half of a wine cooler. A half, not a whole. She didn't like to drink. She went to Windsor to dance and to socialize."

### Went to socialize

Marilyn Pacholek said that she took only \$5 with her to Windsor.

"She was too tight with the money," she said. "There's just no way she would spend a lot of money to get drunk." Savage said he wasn't all that

interested in the investigation.

"Our understanding is that (Hughes) is in grave condition," Savage said. "There are two sides to this: There is what has happened to us and what's happening legally. The legalities are just not relevant to us. Our prayers go out to Kristen Hughes and her family. There is no criticism or animosity at all."

Marilyn Pacholek expressed displeasure in the media using the death of her granddaughter to highlight the potential hazards of Windsor's younger drinking age. The drinking age in Windsor is 19.

"It doesn't matter what age limit they put on it," she said. "If

people want to drink, they will drink. It won't do any good to raise the drinking age."

Because music brought so much joy to Devanie, Dennis Savage took great care in selecting the music for the funeral.

"The perfect song would have been 'Tears in Heaven,'" he said, referring to a song Eric Clapton wrote about the death of his 6-year-old son. "But it would have been too gut-wrenching."

The song contains the line, "Will you be the same, if I saw you in heaven?"

"We are all going to miss Devanie very much," Savage said. "But we all will be seeing her in heaven."

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