

Cyclist's killer shows remorse, sentenced to nine months in jail

BY DARRELL CLEM
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Described as remorseful even by relatives of a man she killed while driving drunk in Westland, Emily Yvonne Coombs of Livonia will spend just nine months in jail for the death of motorcyclist Kevin Perry, a Livonia father of four.

Coombs, 26, caused Perry's death on Wayne Road, near Ford, when she pulled into his path from Westland Bowl's parking lot about 11:30 p.m. last Dec. 5.

Coombs received her sentence last week by Wayne County Circuit Judge Vonda Evans, after pleading guilty to driving drunk and killing 39-year-old Perry of Livonia.

Although she will spend only nine months in jail, Coombs will spend five years on probation and perform 250 days of community service, including lectures about how driving drunk affected her life.

The charge against her carried a possible 15-year prison term, but attorneys reached a plea agreement that Perry's family accepted.

"We can be comfortable with what she got," said Perry's sister, Lori Booth of Farmington Hills. "We honestly feel that my brother would have been satisfied with it."

Perry's family earlier had feared that Coombs might not get any jail time, and they

worried that a too-lenient sentence might send the wrong message that drunken drivers won't be punished if they kill.

Some family members of both sides attend the same church, and Perry's family and Wayne County prosecutors say that Coombs has shown genuine remorse.

"This lady wishes that she could change what she did," said Azzam Elder, deputy chief of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office's trial division. "She probably would trade positions with the victim if she could. That's how remorseful she has been."

Perry's family didn't want Coombs to escape jail time altogether, but they didn't believe it would serve any purpose to imprison her for years, Booth said.

"She seemed the type of person that could help to do something for society, maybe to talk to students, something to turn this around," Booth said Monday, during a telephone interview.

"No matter what she does, Kevin's not coming back," Booth said. "I'd take years off my life to have my brother back, but it wouldn't do any good. We feel bad for Emily, too. It was just a tragic, tragic, bad choice on her part to drive drunk."

Coombs had a 14 percent blood-alcohol level and was legally drunk when she drove into Perry's path on northbound Wayne.

Perry, a painter and maintenance worker, had consumed alcohol, too, but he wasn't above the legal limit. Moreover, police determined from witnesses that he didn't do anything to cause the accident.

Last week, Booth read aloud in court a family statement on the day Coombs was sentenced. She addressed her remarks to Coombs, saying "it's still impossible for us to believe Kevin won't come bursting into a room at any given moment and throw his arms around us and hug us tight in one of his famous back-cracking hugs."

Booth told how Perry's 5-year-old son, Vinnie, would sometimes pat the place where he was sitting and say that his father, now an angel, was sitting next to him.

Booth described how Perry's 7-year-old son, Kevin Jr., quietly picked out a shirt for his father's burial.

She told Coombs that "we hope you'll never fail to remember how that one choice to drink and drive affected so many."

Booth described how the family was told that Coombs stayed by Perry's side after the accident.

"We also want you to know that if you were able to comfort Kevin in any way at the end, we thank you," Booth said. "The important thing is that Kevin was not alone when he died."

Longacre House to hold rummage sale

The historic Longacre House of Farmington Hills will hold a rummage sale 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, July 5 and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, July 6.

The Longacre House is located at 24705 Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile Roads.

All proceeds from the sale benefit the operation and maintenance of the house. Call (248) 477-8404.

Cheer teams host 'free' car wash on June 29

The Farmington High School Cheer Teams will be holding a free car wash 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, June 29 at Motor City Harley-Davidson/Buell, located

at 34900 Grand River in Farmington Hills.

Come out and show your support. Donations would be greatly appreciated.

CORRECTION

A headline and photo caption of a story in the June 20 edition about Roxanne Fitzpatrick should have stated Fitzpatrick is the president, and not commissioner, of the South Farmington Baseball/Softball, Inc.

New Hills resident seeks missing cat

BY JON HUBRED
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Sinta McCall saved a life when she found Sabrina among a litter of three kittens abandoned at one of her rental properties in Florida.

Now the Farmington Hills resident is afraid Sabrina might be in danger again. The 3-year-old feline has been missing since June 4, and Sinta, who moved to Farmington Hills only last July, is heartbroken.

"This is part of my family," she said.

Bill McCall remembers the kittens were in rough shape when his

wife first took them in.

"They were starving to death. Their ears were full of mites," he said. "She cleaned them up."

Sinta adopted Sabrina and her sister, Misty; a third kitten was adopted by another family. The McCalls have also adopted another cat, Rocky. Of the three, Misty is the most likely to wander blocks away from home. On the night of June 4, Sinta had let Sabrina and Rocky out and latched the pet door so that Misty wouldn't go after them. The next morning, Rocky came home. Sabrina didn't.

Sinta has canvassed her neighborhood, which is just north of

Grand River between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt, and papered the area with flyers that show Sabrina, a black cat with a white chest, tummy and paws, pictured with Misty. She's asked neighbors to check in their sheds and garages, under porches or crawl spaces.

"Some people called me, but it wasn't Sabrina," Sinta said.

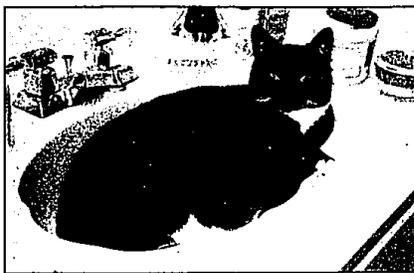
"She went to the Humane Society, and they told her to put out (Sabrina's) favorite cat food and toys around the house," Bill said, but only the neighbor's dog ate the food.

This is just the latest difficulty

Sinta and Bill have had since moving north. A conflict with one of their neighbors, started over a minor car accident, has ballooned to the point where the police were called. Losing Sabrina in the middle of all that has Sinta beside herself.

"I'm really worried about her," Sinta said. "She cannot survive. Misty can catch mice to survive. I watched (Sabrina) once trying to catch birds by the bird feeder. She never caught one."

The McCalls are offering a reward of \$50 for Sabrina's return. For more information, call (248)442-9992 or (813)205-9926.



Lost Kitty: When the McCalls lived in Florida, Sinta would find her cat Sabrina waiting in the sink every morning.

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