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COURTESY PHOTO

Berrett Michael Wirth Crossley, seen in this family photo, died March 6 after suffering a head injury while skateboarding several days earlier.

Buckley teen's death inspires helmet law, awareness campaign

BY ALEX BRUELL
Reporter

After the tragic death of 13-year-old Berrett Michael Wirth Crossley earlier this month following a skateboarding accident, his mother Larae Crossley is on a mission to make sure other kids take safety seriously — in Buckley and beyond. “I never want a parent to feel what this is like, ever,” Crossley said in an interview Thursday, March 11. “I just want it to be a normal thing: You grab your skateboard and you grab your helmet. I want to make

sure that every child has a helmet, and that no parent ever has to feel like this.” Crossley — along with Berrett’s aunt Lacie Stone and grandmother Gayle Butler — spoke with the Courier-Herald about the life Berrett lived and their mission to prevent more deaths like his. Berrett sustained a head injury March 2 while skateboarding at the Buckley skatepark. Two days later, he suffered a subdural hematoma (bleeding in the brain) that sent him to Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital in Tacoma.

Despite undergoing emergency brain surgery, he did not regain brain activity and was pronounced dead at the hospital the evening of March 6. While family and friends grapple with Berrett’s loss, Buckley officials are already working on an ordinance that would require helmet wearing at the park — a rule Crossley said will save lives. And in the last two weeks, she’s learned just how far Berrett’s legacy extends. “I feel honored that I was chosen to be his mother, and I feel so proud

of the person that he is,” Crossley said. “I never imagined that my goofy, quirky little boy has touched so many lives.” **“HE DID IT TO THE MAX”** Berrett was an adventurous, witty kid who loved anything that let him “go fast and jump high,” Butler said. Whether he was skateboarding, riding quads, sledding and tubing, playing sports or building a fort, he was always interested in the adrenaline rush and in testing his outdoor skills.

“He wanted to be able to live it to the fullest,” Crossley said. “No matter what it was, he wanted to make sure he did it to the max.” He had a talent for drawing and an entrepreneurial spirit, and dreamed of designing skateboarding clothes and decks as a pro skateboarder himself. He’d recently finished designing the first shirt for his skateboard company called “Space Kadet Skateboards.” Berrett’s family also spoke to his welcoming and positive outlook on

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Enumclaw council selects two new members

BY RAY MILLER-STILL
Editor

The Enumclaw City Council’s decision was quick and unanimous: Corrie Frazier and Tom

Sauvageau will be the city’s newest council members. The process of looking for two new city leaders began when former council members Kyle Jacobson and Tony Binion moved outside Enumclaw’s borders last January. Initially, a highly surprising 19 people applied for those two open spaces, though three ended up pulling their applications.

“I think the kids call it ‘First World Problems’ now, because I’ve never seen or even heard of an opening such as this that has a 9 to 1 ratio of applicants to open positions,” Council member Chance La Fleur, who was clearly ecstatic about the interest over the open seats, said during the March 8 meeting. The council spent nearly four hours getting to know all the candidates during their Feb. 22 meeting, but in the end, it only took about 20 minutes of deliberation at last week’s meeting to come to a final pick. Each council member had nothing but praise for everyone who applied.

“If your name [does] not end up being selected tonight, it’s not that you’re not wanted,” La Fleur continued. “It sucks

to have to pick from a group of candidates that are so amazingly qualified.” “We even joked that we wished we had a council of 12 seats,” Council member Anthony Wright added later. “All across the board, there wasn’t anyone in there that I wouldn’t be proud to serve with,” Council member Hoke Overland said near the end of the night. La Fleur argued that his picks, Frazier and Sauvageau, come with financial experience that is likely to help the city through the remainder of the bad economic times brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. “2020, unfortunately, is not over, even though the calendar has turned, I fear,” La Fleur said. “I think we have some potential economic roads that are a little bumpy ahead of us.” Frazier is a public accountant and IRS-enrolled agent that specializes in individual and corporate tax preparation, but also has experience with small business accounting; Sauvageau is the president and founder of Sauvageau CFO, LLC, an account management firm, and also co-owns the

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PHOTO BY RAY MILLER-STILL

Construction expert Will Martin taking some measurements of the siding of a house in Enumclaw’s Suntop Farms.

Law firm looks to sue LGI Homes over recent storm damage

BY RAY MILLER-STILL
Editor

A Seattle-based law firm is looking to help homeowners in Enumclaw’s Suntop Farm development file a lawsuit against developer LGI Homes. The issue at hand is whether

some of the homes were improperly constructed, leading to roof and siding damage when a snow storm blew through the Plateau on the night of Feb. 13. Construction defects happen to be a specialty of Casey Law PLLC, See **SUE**, Page 3

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Berrett

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life, and how he went out of his way to stand up for others. He showed maturity beyond his age, his family said.

"He never wanted anybody to change who they were," Crossley said. "I think he wanted to set that precedent of being that good person that everybody had in their life. Maybe you had a couple crap friends; well guess what, you've got a Berrett. And a Berrett is a great friend."

In the last two weeks, Crossley and the rest of the family have been shocked by the sheer number of people who have reached out with memories of Berrett.

A GoFundMe fundraiser to cover Berrett's medical expenses, set up by Berrett's aunt Lynn Johnson, had already surpassed its \$25,000 goal by March 10, four days after it started. The family will also put the money toward efforts to educate kids on the

importance of helmet usage. A friend and a teacher of Berrett recently started a #Wearit-4Berrett helmet safety campaign on their own, and the family "took it and ran with it," Crossley said.

"I had no idea, none, of all of these people," Crossley said. "I have spent several days trying to figure out how to build this legacy for my son, and in his 13 years, he'd already done it. ... Everybody's love and outreach has been humbling. To see the effect my son has had on so many people's lives, it's been one of the most amazing feelings ever."

And as an organ donor, Berrett's legacy will last in a literal sense, too.

"His heart, kidneys and liver saved four people's lives," Crossley said. "We know for sure one of them was a child, because his heart could only go to a child."

"BE THE MEAN PARENT"

Now, Crossley is on a mission to get other kids to take their safety seriously.

Her message: "Be the mean parent. Be the annoying friend. Do not be afraid to be that person, because you could save their life."

Her mission is already

bearing fruit.

The Buckley City Council discussed Berrett's death during their March 9 evening meeting, and council member Ron Smith proposed the city draft an ordinance that would change the city code to require helmets at the skatepark. The current plan is to bring a proposal for the council to consider at their next meeting March 23.

"We all seem to be in agreement that helmets need to be worn there, same as riding a bicycle on the street, or anywhere," Councilmember Connie Bender said in a phone interview March 11. "It's a safety factor. I think this will be a good thing. Hopefully everybody will abide by it and use a helmet and we won't see this tragedy again." Crossley is eager for the ordinance to pass and wants to push other cities to make sure they have a similar law on the books.

She added that she has no intention of bringing legal action against the city. The unfortunate reality, she said, is that Berrett sometimes made the mistake of walking out the door, helmet in hand, without putting that helmet on.

"The city of Buckley has been so amazing through all of this, and it is not their fault," Crossley said. "Nobody thinks of something like this until, unfortunately, something happens and it's too late."

Some White River High School students have already reached out to Crossley to offer their support, a gesture she appreciates since younger kids so easily respect and mimic the behavior of their older friends.

During the council meeting, Smith also raised the idea of creating a program, possibly grant-funded, to purchase helmets and lend them out for users of the skatepark, and working with the fire department to train kids on proper usage of the helmets.

Smith informed the rest of the council that many of Berrett's Glacier Middle School classmates showed up to class Tuesday with skateboard helmets attached to their backpacks in a show of support for Berrett.

"I think each one of his friends realized that could have been them, and each one of their parents realized that could have been their kid," Butler said.

Open

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"We started going antiquing and going to local vintage markets, and I just fell in love with it," Hyce recalled. "So I started consigning little pieces here and there... it just kind of became my thing."

Hyce started hosting her own vintage markets in Alaska once her son's procedure was completed. But soon after, her husband's work relocated to Washington, bringing her back to the Pacific Northwest — specifically, Buckley, where she's now lived for three years.

However, just consigning vintage items and having booths at local shows wasn't enough for her.

"I've always wanted to have my own shop," Hyce said. "Growing up, my mom had a scrapbook store in Bothell, so I was that kid that grew up in that retail, small business atmosphere."

She really wanted to open a shop in Buckley, to "stick with the historic downtown district vibe," but every deal she tried to make fell through.

After taking a step back, Hyce found herself walking down Cole Street when she saw a "For Rent" sign in a window.

"I was like, this is a cute building, this has potential," she said of the space that recently housed a candy shop and then a tutoring center. "So I reached out, and it worked out, and here we are."

The front half of the store consists of 11 different vendors that provide Urban Junktion with various consigned items for customers to peruse and purchase.

"I started as a vendor, so it was really important for me to incorporate other vendors that are starting out," Hyce said. "We're always welcoming more."

But it's the back half that's likely far more exciting to local crafters, as that space is being reserved for various classes to teach people how to create decor of their own. Classes aim to include everything from lettering and sign making to how to create your own vintage earrings, Hyce said.

The first class will be quite unique — taught by Hyce's mother Deanna Wentz, it will be all about how to arrange your own charcuterie board.

"Basically, learning how to display and present food in a fun, crazy way," Wentz said. "All of the setting up."

The charcuterie board class is scheduled for April 2. You can sign up in person at the store or online on Facebook.





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