

The community of Barrie was rocked by the deaths of six young people in a single-vehicle crash over the weekend of Aug. 27-28 and our reporters, in an incredible team effort, covered the story with compassion, fairness and dignity.

John Edwards, who was working when the crash happened, filed the original breaking news story and followed it up with multiple updates as details of what happened emerged.

On Monday, as the investigation into the crash continued, Frank Matys and Sara Carson jumped in to help.

Frank headed to the scene while Sara and John made calls and reached out to people through social media to verify the identities of the young people who died and connect with their friends and relatives to learn more about who they were.

The end result was four online stories, one of which was updated multiple times, on Simcoe.com as well as a separate front-page print story for the Barrie Advance.

Adam Martin-Robbins

Managing Editor

Simcoe.com, Barrie Advance

THURSDAY  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

# BARRIE Advance



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The six victims have been identified as Jersey Mitchell (top left), River Wells, Jason Ono-O'Connor; Curtis King (bottom left), Haley Marin and Luke West. Metroland image

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## 'SHOCKING AND HORRIBLE TRAGEDY'

JOHN EDWARDS  
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For Mayor Jeff Lehman, the death of six young people in a crash in Barrie was a "shocking and horrible tragedy."  
"As a parent myself, this is the

worst nightmare," Lehman said in a statement Aug. 28.

Barrie police, at about 2 a.m. Aug. 28, located the single-vehicle that had crashed in the area of McKay Road and Veterans Drive.

Police hadn't released many details about the crash as of press

time Aug. 29, but, according to Barrie CAO and city manager Michael Prowse, the area is currently the site of a city construction project, and the intersection has been "fully closed and signed accordingly for many months."

Police were observed standing around what appeared to be a large concrete hole surrounded by fence

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# COMMUNITY MEMBERS LEFT FLOWERS NEAR SITE OF CRASH

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ing in a section of McKay Road.

Police said the occupants of the vehicle are believed to be six individuals reported missing Saturday evening. Police wouldn't confirm the identities of the deceased, but, through social-media posts and speaking with family and friends, Simcoe.com was able to confirm the identities of the victims: Curtis King, 22, River Wells, 23, Luke West, 22, Haley Marin, 21, and Jersey Mitchell, 21 and Jason Ono-O'Connor, 22.

Community members have been leaving flowers near the crash site to honour those killed. Among those who placed bouquets were Kailey Graham and Kayleigh Bryant-Nordeen.

Speaking with reporters, both women said they knew Mitchell, Marin, King and Wells, and were with them, as well as two others they

identified as "Jason" and "Luke," Friday night in downtown Barrie.

They said they parted ways with the group at roughly 4 a.m.

"We just thought they were headed home or whatever they were doing," Bryant-Nordeen said. "We were actually supposed to hang out with Jersey and Haley the next day. When everyone started posting the missing (persons) stuff and then they didn't answer, that's kind of just obviously (when we) knew something was wrong."

Both women said they were meant to have left with the group, but decided to go home at the last minute.

"It's really hard to think about," Graham said. "It makes me think that ... if we were there, we could have maybe stopped it."

Bryant-Nordeen described the victims as "a great group of people."

"Curtis was super funny,"

she said. "Jersey, no matter what, she kind of always just had your back; she was just feisty and just a super sweetheart."

Graham likened Mitchell to "a big sister."

Marin and Wells were "definitely some of the purest people I've met, for sure," Bryant-Nordeen said.

West left an impression on Jim Lowe, who coached him during his time as a player with the Barrie Bombers lacrosse team.

"I've coached thousands of kids over the past 25 years and if I had to name the kids who meant the most to me ... he would be on a very short list," Lowe said Sunday. "He made you care about him because he just had this passion and fire in front of him. It's an absolutely devastating loss of a good human being."

Loren Mathias attended Barrie North Collegiate Institute with Mitchell and Marin. She said she got a call

about the crash and her heart started racing and she felt "sick."

"It doesn't feel real," she said.

Mathias said the trio connected in high school and quickly became "best friends."

"They were both funny and always had a really big smile on their face," she said. "The worst part is thinking of how much of their lives they had left and how much they were going to do. That's the hardest part. I'm looking at a lot of photos and I'm cherishing all the good times."

Bentley Wells, River's father, mourned his son in a Facebook post that included pictures of them together.

"I lost my River yesterday in a car accident I'm going to miss you River," he said. "You were my everything in life."

Mason Bonner commented on the post and said, "He was a great kid, smart, fun-



Frank Matys/Metroland  
Kailey Graham (left) and Kayleigh Bryant-Nordeen brought flower bouquets to honour those killed in a crash in the area of McKay Road and County Road 27 over the weekend.

ny and very compassionate. I will miss him very much."

Aidan Douglas is organizing a GoFundMe page for the King family and said Curtis will be remembered for his "contagious" laughter and a "personality that lit up any room he walked into."

"You positively impacted everyone you met ... you showed genuine love and kindness to the people around you and knew how to make the best out of every-

thing. You were epic," Douglas wrote.

— With files from Sara Carson

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: A crash took the lives of six young people on the weekend, and Simcoe.com felt it was important to follow up and talk to family and friends to find out what these young adults were like and the impact they had.*



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