

Police find body in river, believe it to be Trevyan Rowe

Trevyan

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Authorities say that a body pulled from the Genesee River shortly before dark on Sunday matches the description of Trevyan Rowe, the teenager hundreds of people had been searching for since Thursday night. "At this time we do not have a positive identification," said Rochester Police Chief Michael Ciminelli. "However, the body that was taken from the river is a male with a physical and clothing description consistent with Trevyan Rowe." About 5:30 p.m. Sunday, members of the Rochester Police Department and Monroe County Sheriff's Office scuba teams used side-scan sonar equipment to find a body in the river, according to Ciminelli.

While Ciminelli said there had not yet been a positive body identification, school officials and Mayor Lovely Warren spoke with certainty about his death, and Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo sent out a statement with heartfelt condolences for Trevyan's family.

The Rochester City School District will be providing counseling services to students, staff and members of the community at School 12 from 7

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a.m. to 5 p.m., according to Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams, and a vigil for Trevyan is set for 7 p.m. Monday at the Blue Cross Arena at the Community War Memorial.

Deane-Williams said that an independent investigation will be conducted relating to Trevyan's disappearance. The 14-year-old with autism was gone up to 10 hours before his family found out that he was missing, and school did not notify the boy's mother, Carrie Houston, as they should have, Rochester City School District officials said Sunday.

Public and private schools with autistic students with a known tendency to walk off are required to have plans to prevent them straying from school grounds and to search for them if they do. Questions regarding whether or not the school followed protocol remain unanswered. "We have a variety of conflicting reports. We felt it was most prudent at this time to have an independent investigation which will be conducted so we will have a

thorough report in accounting for our community,” said Deane-Williams. “At this time we simply do not have all of the facts. All of us are devastated and this is not the outcome we expected.”

The search for Trevyan spanned more than three days, with an estimated turnout of 1,000 people Saturday. The strong volunteer presence continued into Sunday.

Houston spoke at a briefing on Sunday afternoon, before the body was found. She thanked community members for their commitment to finding her son.

“This is clearly not the outcome that any of us wanted,” said Warren. “I am very, very sad by this news, which is every parent’s worst fear.

“I want to thank the thousands of Rochester citizens who took to the streets in the snow and cold to look for Trevyan. Our city’s heart clearly shined.”

Trevyan arrived at School 12 at 999 South Ave. about 7:30 a.m. Thursday but left school grounds. Surveillance video shows him walking away on South Avenue.

According to Ciminelli, there were a number of 911 calls from people who reported seeing a person on the Douglass-Anthony Memorial Bridge bridge in downtown Rochester on Thursday morning, before he was reported missing.

“Our investigators located one of the individuals that called and they pointed out the location where they had seen the person standing,” Ciminelli said.

Scuba teams from the Rochester Police Department and Monroe County Sheriff’s Office deployed two boats in the river around 2:30 p.m. Sunday. They used sonar equipment for about an hour and a half to search between the Douglass- Anthony Memorial Bridge and the Court Street dam.

Searchers located the body in the river near the east bank just north of the bridge. They marked the spot with a red buoy and divers spent considerable time under water before removing the body.

Medical Examiner’s Office workers arrived at the scene and drove away with the body.

Ciminelli said that a full investigation still needs to be completed, and that RPD will be working to review footage and trace a timeline of the event from the school to the river.

Over the days of the search, Rochester police looked for signs of Trevyan in a pond next to School 12, deployed K-9 units and scoured city neighborhoods and Mt. Hope Cemetery, Deputy Chief La’Ron Singletary said at a press briefing Sunday afternoon at the Al Sigl Center.

Also on Sunday, a small army of volunteers headed out for the third straight day of passing out leaflets with Trevyan’s photo and searching for him. An estimated 1,000 people turned out to search Saturday.

It is not clear whether School 12 officials noticed Trevyan was absent on Thursday, but they did not notify his mother.

It was not until Trevyan failed to arrive on the bus that normally brings him home in late afternoon that his family realized something was wrong, both Rachel Rosner, the education and support director of Autism Up, and district spokesman Carlos Garcia said Sunday.

Houston called the school demanding an explanation. When school officials realized something was amiss, both administrators and the mother called Rochester police to report him missing.

That occurred about 5:15 p.m. Thursday.

Singletary said the district would handle all questions related to its policies and procedures. He did say, however, future conversations will focus on how the school district and police department can better work together.

Family believes lost cellphone may have upset routine

Trevyan's family said his decision to turn away from the school door and walk off was not like him.

"He's never done something like this before," said Trevyan's cousin Detoya McCoy of Rochester. "We think a trigger that set this off was him losing his cellphone."

McCoy said it appeared that Trevyan lost his phone on the way to school, became upset and did not follow his normal routine.

"Instead of going into the school, he turned right going down South Avenue and started walking," she said, citing surveillance video in the area.

Trevyan traveled to school on Thursday with his younger sister, who did not immediately notice her brother veer off course.

Garcia said he did not know whether Trevyan was marked present or absent, and said perhaps he could have entered the school for attendance and then left.

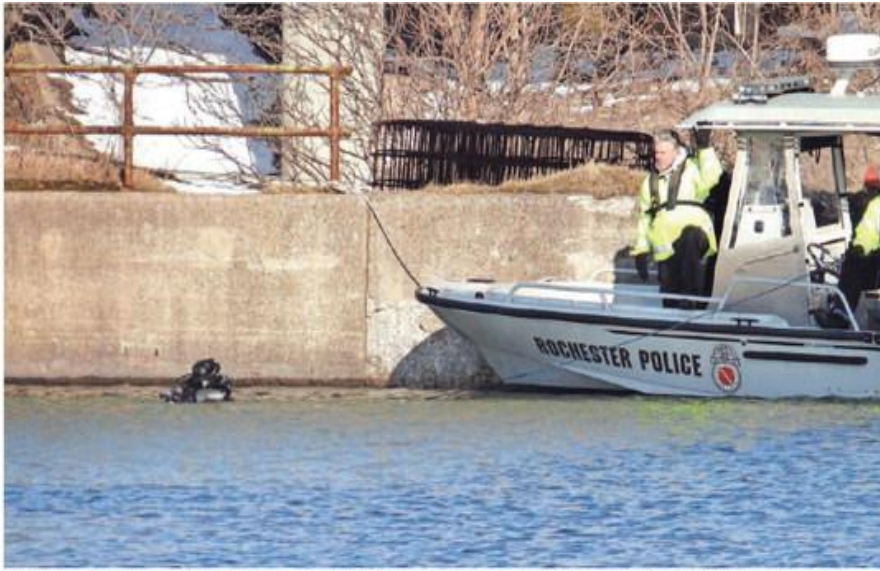
He verified the school didn't contact Trevyan's mother but said it's possible it had called the wrong number. He also did not know if school officials had walked down the hall to ask Trevyan's sister if she knew where he was.

Rosner said the desire or compulsion to flee is common in people with autism, and some are drawn to water, though his mother hadn't believed that to be the case with Trevyan.

Rosner, who helped coordinate the volunteer search, said she wasn't certain, but she did not think Trevyan was prone to walking away. There have been numerous instances of children with autism wandering off from schools and other locations.

"We're devastated," said Sarah Milko, executive director of Autism Up. "This is all of our worst fear. Autism is a communicative and social disorder so it really adds a layer of complexity. It's every parent's worst nightmare."

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A police scuba diver, left, confers with a crew member shortly before recovering a body from the Genesee River late

A police scuba diver, left, confers with a crew member shortly before recovering a body from the Genesee River late Sunday afternoon. PHOTOS BY STEVE ORR/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Scuba team members on a Monroe County sheriff's boat shield a sonar screen

Scuba team members on a Monroe County sheriff's boat shield a sonar screen from the sun as they search the Genesee River on Sunday.



Trevyan Rowe