

# Death of Sam Barlow High School senior last December ruled an overdose

by Maxine Bernstein, The Oregonian

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Investigators say Rachel Daggett, an 18-year-old Sam Barlow High School senior who died suddenly at a Gresham home in December, overdosed on an oxycodone pill that she ingested by smoking it with friends.

Now, two 18-year-olds and a 33-year-old Troutdale man are in custody, accused of selling or helping to broker the sale of the lethal dose.

A two-month investigation by Gresham detectives, working with the Drug Enforcement Administration, found that the oldest of the three suspects, Ronald Todd Zaloznik, 33, had a prescription for the drug. He's accused of selling the pills through his younger brother, Tyler Zaloznik, and Tyler's friends, and using the proceeds to pay their rent, utility bills and to buy food, according to a probable cause affidavit filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

Gresham Police Chief Craig Junginger said Wednesday the case is not isolated. Investigators have found that the illicit use of the prescription drug by young people and high school students in the metropolitan area is common.

"This is such a serious problem that's occurring in the schools," Junginger said. "I want to send a message out to the community that if you participate in this kind of behavior, we're going to put all of our resources into identifying and prosecuting you."

The girl's parents, Jack and Teresa Daggett, said they were stunned by what they learned during the police inquiry. Rachel Daggett attended school regularly, worked after school at Auntie Anne's Pretzels at Clackamas Town Center and did a senior project in law at the Gresham court. Her parents had celebrated her 18th birthday Nov. 28, taking her out to dinner at Applebee's. They worried about her having a driver's license, not drugs.

"As a parent, I didn't see it coming. We were broadsided by this," Jack Daggett said. "It's so senseless to me, that a stupid pill of something half the size of your thumbnail, something that small can have such a big impact on so many lives. We'd like to see something positive come out of this ... that one other kid doesn't make that decision, so her life is not in vain."

Ronald Zaloznik is accused of three counts of unlawful delivery of a controlled substance. His younger brother, Tyler, 18, is accused of three counts of unlawful delivery of a controlled substance and three counts of unlawful possession of a controlled substance. Tyler's friend, Shane Douglas Gill, a Gresham resident who turned 18 last month, faces one count each of unlawful delivery and possession of a controlled substance. The two are not currently enrolled in the Gresham-Barlow School District.

Bail has been set for each of the three at \$250,000. More serious charges under the federal Len Bias law, a statute intended to punish those whose drug dealing leads to serious injury or death, could be pursued, officials said.

The two-month police investigation began after Gresham police were called out Dec. 9 to a rental home at 828 S.E. Phoebe Court shortly after 9 a.m. Daggett, who lived in Damascus, was found dead inside the home.

Investigators learned that Daggett was helping some friends clean their house before they moved out. That night, she and two young men each ingested one 30-milligram oxycodone pill. Daggett went to sleep about 1:45 a.m. on Dec. 9, on the floor of the home.

When another friend in the home woke up about 9 a.m., he told police he tried to wake Daggett but saw that "she was blue" and called 9-1-1.

Detectives from Gresham's Special Enforcement Team began interviewing Daggett's friends, acquaintances and family. They learned that Daggett had bought three oxycodone pills the day before her death, and quickly identified suspects. They arranged several undercover pill buys from the suspects, before raiding the Zaloznik's Troutdale address on Southeast Halsey Loop on Friday.

According to Gill's interview with detectives after his arrest, he admitted brokering a deal Dec. 8 in which Daggett gave him \$120 to buy six 30-milligram oxycodone pills from Tyler Zaloznik. Gill said he and Daggett went together to buy the pills, meeting Zaloznik at the Plaid Pantry on Kane Road at the Columbia River Highway. Gill obtained the pills, and gave them to Daggett, according to court records.

A toxicology report from state medical examiner's office found a .11 milligrams per liter concentration of oxycodone present in Daggett's blood at the time of her death. "This would be considered a lethal level in someone who is naive to the drug or hasn't developed a tolerance to it," said Dr. Christopher Young, a deputy state medical examiner.

Oxycodone is an opiate drug prescribed to treat anxiety or pain but often stolen, bought or sold illicitly and taken for recreational use. It depresses respiration, causing fluid to accumulate in the lungs and insufficient oxygen to the brain, he said.

Gresham Detective Scott Hogan said Daggett had smoked the pill the night before her death.

"They remove the coating from outside of the pill by either rubbing it off or using saliva to suck the outer coating off, then put it on foil and smoke it up," Hogan said. "I think we're looking at a growing problem."

Rachel's mother said her daughter had complained of headaches, drowsiness and trouble concentrating about a week to two weeks before her death.

Teresa Daggett hopes other young people will learn from Rachel's sudden death. "There's kids that don't realize one pill, one time. Something went terribly wrong, and we don't have our little girl anymore."

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