

Small towns mourn homicide of young resident; remember him as man with 'happy eyes'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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The small town of St. Jacob and Troy communities have been rattled by the death of 19-year-old St. Jacob native Taylor Clark.



Clark had listed his car on Craigslist and had apparently driven to St. Louis to see about a transaction. His vehicle was found at a truck driving school in St. Louis near Lambert Airport. He was reported missing on Monday night and his body was found in Missouri. His death has been ruled a homicide.

Hazelwood Police and the St. Louis Area Major Case Squad are now handling the homicide investigation.

Lorrell Krenning, assistant manager affiliated with ZX Convenience Store in Troy, where Clark worked, said there will be a candlelight vigil in memory of Clark tonight at the convenience store. She said people are already arriving for the vigil.

“It is just a shocking tragedy,” she said. “He is a boy who grew up in this town. This town is only about 11,000 and the town he grew up in-St. Jacob-is less than 1,100. You just don’t ever think of that happening in a small town scenario. This has rattled the whole community.”

Krenning said she knows Clark’s family well. His mother used to work at the convenience store in Troy, she said.

“He was a very good boy,” she said. “He was a hard worker and an upstanding, respectable student at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. He was going on with life and would have been a big success. He was a jokester. He didn’t have any enemies and was a very smart boy.”

Krenning works at another one of the ZX stores, but she is filling in at the Troy location because she lives in Troy. She said people have been coming through the store non-stop and the media is now swarming to the location.

[St. Jacob had a population of 1,098 in the 2010 Census](#). Acting St. Jacob Police Chief Jeff Souders said he doesn’t recall anything like this happening to any resident from the village before. There is very little crime in St. Jacob, and neighbors in the community are the true definition of neighbors.

The Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis has been activated to probe the killing. Clark’s death has been ruled a homicide. His body was found near a truck-driving school in Hazelwood, Mo. He apparently was driving across the river because of a Craigslist deal.

St. Jacob Police are not investigating the case, but Souders said his phone has been ringing off the hook about the matter and it is the talk of the town.

“Channel 4 played video of a sentencing of a young man who set someone up on Craigslist and murdered them after this story was shown,” Souders said. “People need to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings. Not only has this hit this town hard, but the school. St. Jacob is part of the Triad School District. A lot of young people know each other. I understand there has been thousands of people interested on what is going on with Facebook.”

Krenning invited as many people who wanted to come out tonight to attend the candlelight vigil. Anyone with any information concerning the crime should contact Hazelwood Police Department at 314-838-5000.

The convenience store manager closed the conversation with a few telling comments to describe Clark: “He had very happy eyes. Customers just loved him. He was a very good kid.”