

Student dies 18 days after Jan. 8 car accident

By Greg Galiffa
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

For 18 days, her family waited by her side for her to wake up — but that moment never came.

After more than two weeks in the hospital, Penn State student Rachel Petkac died Jan. 25 after suffering complications from a car accident she was involved in earlier this month. She was 19 years old.

"She was a gem," the Rev. Philip Bender of Good Shepherd Catholic Church said. "She was

everything I think a young lady ought to be."

Pennsylvania State Police Trooper Walter Butler said Petkac was driving on Penn State on Jan. 8 when she lost control of her minivan on Route 550 and crashed into a telephone pole on the driver-side door.

Petkac was driving at 55 mph — 10 mph over the speed limit —

Butler said. The accident was a result of speeding and snowy conditions, he said.

The student was unresponsive when they pulled her from her vehicle, which was in the shape of a "V" from the collision, Butler said. She was treated and eventually transported to Geisinger Medical Center.

At the hospital, Bender said Petkac's mother never left her side. Her father, two younger brothers and younger sister were always visiting, he said.

But for the 18 days she was in

the hospital, Petkac never regained consciousness.

Bender said Petkac was on a respirator in the hospital that eventually had to be shut off once it began to cause damage.

On Jan. 24, Bender said the family visited Petkac one last time. The next day, the hospital shut off the respirator, he said.

Petkac — a community education and development major and a Schreyer Honors College student — was also involved with outdoor activities and worked at College 9 Movie Theater, Bender said.

Justin Walker, a manager at College 9, 3031 Carnegie Drive, said he remembers Petkac for being a woman everyone always enjoyed working with.

When he heard about her accident, Walker could only hope for the best, he said.

"I was hoping it wasn't bad," he said. "It was upsetting. Even when you don't know someone you work with, you're always hoping everything will be alright."

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Petkac

Volunteers to send food packs

By Laurie Stern
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Wrapping scoops of soy, chicken-flavored supplement, dried veggies and rice was the recipe for relief Friday afternoon, as volunteers of all ages gathered to assemble food packages for starving children in Haiti.

Held in the Presidents Hall of the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, the "meal-packaging blitz" was arranged by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, "a membership organization that provides financial services and charitable outreach programs."

The goal: to create 32,000 packages of high protein food to be distributed to local food banks across Haiti by the non-profit organization Kids Against Hunger.

Planned prior to the earthquake that devastated Haiti, the event proved especially timely because

half of the packages will be sent to the country and should arrive within 10 days, said Duane Erdman, an event coordinator for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Frank Stone, a senior partner with the Thrivent regional financial office, wrapped packages with his wife. He said he was pleased to be surrounded by so many enthusiastic volunteers.

"I'm too busy working. I don't have an opportunity like this," Stone said. "We thought it would be cool to have a project and invite people to come. We got a turnout beyond our wildest imagination."

Penn State students and other community members were originally invited to participate in the meal-packaging assembly line. But when more people than expected expressed an interest in volunteering, some had to be turned away.

Valerie Marcellus, the president

of Club Kreyol, a Haitian cultural club for Penn State students, said there will be other opportunities for students to lend a hand.

"I think the fact that so many people want to help is a good problem to have," Marcellus (senior-nutrition) said. "Club Kreyol is working with several other organizations, including the Caribbean Student Association, GlobeMed and Project Haiti to have collaborative programs that will benefit people in Haiti."

One volunteer filling cardboard boxes with dried food said despite the robotic nature of the work, he wasn't yet weary of the task.

"It can't be tedious when you're helping someone," said Denny DiOrio, of Danville, Pa., president of the Columbia-Montour County Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.



Michael Smith helps his daughter Cassie, 9, as they prepare food packages for children overseas on Friday at The Penn Stater.

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Mann inquiry concludes, board to release findings

By Colleen Boyle
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A panel of Penn State faculty and staff concluded the inquiry of Penn State meteorology professor Michael Mann this weekend and is slated to release its "Climategate" findings later in the week, university officials said.

The end of the two-month inquiry marks a major point in the worldwide climate debate. Penn State's inquiry began after hundreds of illegally obtained e-mails were leaked last November from a private server in the Climate

Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in England, containing comments critics say suggest Mann and his colleagues may have distorted climate change evidence.

The inquiry's findings will determine if the university will further investigate Mann's work. Penn State President Graham Spanier addressed the inquiry and the panel's work during the Board of Trustees meeting on Jan. 22.

"I know they've taken the time and spent hundreds of hours studying documents and interviewing people and looking at

issues from all sides," Spanier said.

But conservative groups are already mobilizing to respond to the university's findings. Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) — a Penn State student group working to "advance the principles of individual and economic freedom, limited government and traditional values" — has taken an interest in the Mann inquiry.

On Feb. 12, YAF will host a demonstration in front of the HUB to protest what the group feels is a violation of academic integrity. YAF member Samuel Settle said,

The 9-12 Project of Central PA, a conservative group, will join the demonstration.

Settle (sophomore-political science and history) said the university's handling of the inquiry unsettles him.

"What the university has done is they've taken three Penn State employees and assigned them to deciding whether or not Mann violated university policy," he said. "That's an awful lot of power in the hands of three with no external oversight."

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