

Fenton Gay Teen Takes Own Life

BY BTL STAFF

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Just two months after telling his mom he was gay, a 17-year-old Fenton boy has taken his own life, according to a Flint Journal report. His mother told the paper that bullying is to blame.

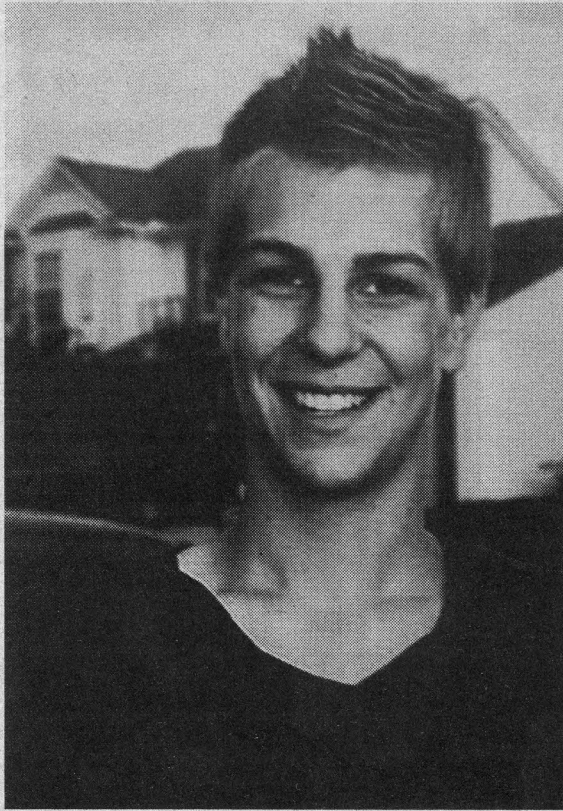
According to the report, on Nov. 27 Josh Pacheco was found in the family's garage where he had parked his truck and left it running. A note in the truck said "I'm sorry I wasn't able to be strong enough."

His mother, Lynnette Capehart, told the Flint Journal that Pacheco was bullied at school and that the weekend after Thanksgiving he had told his sisters that he was questioning his life and his future. On Nov. 26 Capehart made an appointment for her son to talk to a counselor on Nov. 28, but he did not live long enough to make the appointment.

Pacheco was a junior at Linden High. He was part of the Kidz Theatre Kompany, worked at Tim Hortons, and enjoyed his advanced placement politics class, the report states.

Hundreds attended the funeral and on Dec. 5 there was a memorial at the Mill Pond gazebo for those who wanted to share stories and pay tribute.

Superintendent Ed Koledo was saddened by the incident and has been busy trying to provide support for the students in the District who may be hurting because of



Josh Pacheco was 17 when he ended his life last week. His family blames bullying.

Pacheco's death. "On Wednesday last week, we brought over all of our counselors and social workers to the high school. We also had ministers representing five local churches at the start of the day and into the second period. School social workers and counselors remained available throughout Wednesday and are still available if needed. We did have

some students seek out, individually and in groups, a chance to talk, and we had various conversations going on throughout the day.

"We also put together a parent letter that was mailed home to let parents of high school and middle school students know what was going on. ...We are looking for support from different groups in bringing

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in a program to improve what we do for bully prevention and suicide awareness. Possibly something in the short term for grievance at the high school and something longer term at both the high school and middle school to improve programming, something that includes initiatives with students, staff, and community."

Linden Schools had a detailed

bullying plan in place before this incident, which included regular talks in the classroom. "Bullying is always a problem almost everywhere in our society. I do not think the efforts to stop it are ever complete. While I do think we have good initiatives in place for bully awareness, we realize it is never enough. Annually we report to our Board the anti-bully programming planned for each school. We are looking to improve what we do by bringing in experts in the field that have established programs for improving success in curbing bullying by working with students, staff, and the community."

Linden Schools has information on their website about their bullying program www.lindenschools.org/Anti-Bully%20Programming%202012-13.pdf, and about suicide prevention (www.lindenschools.org/Suicide%20Prevention%20-%20Facts,%20Signs%20and%20Interventions.pdf). According to the documentation, provided by KidPeace, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people 15 to 24 years of age. From 1980-1996, the rate of suicide among all persons aged 10-14 years increased by 100 percent. The suicide rate for young white females has doubled, while for young white males it has tripled since 1950.