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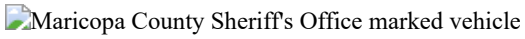
17-year-old Canyon State Academy student dies after being found unresponsive

Chelsea Curtis, Arizona Republic Published 6:39 p.m. MT Jan. 23, 2020



Maricopa County Sheriff's Office marked vehicle *(Photo: Nathan J. Fish/The Republic)*

A 17-year-old student at Canyon State Academy died Tuesday after he was found unresponsive, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said Thursday.

The teenager was found unresponsive about 11:30 p.m. when emergency personal responded to the academy at 20061 E. Rittenhouse Road in Queen Creek, the sheriff's office said.

He was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead, according to the sheriff's office. His name was not released.

Details about the events leading up to the teenager's death were not provided by the sheriff's office.

His cause of death has not yet been determined by the Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office and the investigation is ongoing.

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A spokesperson for the academy did not immediately respond to The Arizona Republic's requests for comment.

Canyon State Academy was founded in 1948 for at-risk children and adolescents, according to the academy's website. (https://web.archive.org/web/20200125030623/https://canyonstateacademy.com/about-us-2/) It has a residential program with academic, career and technical training, athletics and more.

It is now operated by Rite of Passage, which is a national provider of therapeutic and educational programs for youth, the website states.

The academy was previously called the Arizona Boys Ranch before it was changed to Canyon State Academy in April 2000, the Republic reported.

The change was meant to signify a fresh start for the organization after years of scrutiny after the death of Nicholaus Contreraz, a 16-year-old boy who collapsed while being punished in May 1998.

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