

Youth loved being on slopes; chairlift fall remains under investigation

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

He was 7 years old and loved to ski, a child described as simply "happy out on the slopes."

Now members of the Sugar Bowl Ski Team are being comforted by grief counselors and are offering their own condolences and support to the family of John Henderson, who was a second-grader at North Davis Elementary School.

The boy, a member of the ski team, fell Sunday from a chairlift he was riding with two of his teammates. He died two days later, after surgery at Renown Medical Center in Reno, according to officials of the resort and its ski team. What caused the boy to fall from the lift, in what ski industry officials described as an exceptionally rare accident, remained under investigation Wednesday.

His death brought heartbreak to the 400-member Sugar Bowl Ski Team, which offers programs for youths 5 to 18.

"We're a close community, and we're devastated for John and his family," said Bill Hudson, the ski team's executive director. "We're really just focusing on what we can do as a community to support them at this time."

John Henderson was in his second year with the ski team. The boy was an avid mountain enthusiast, whom Hudson described as "an excellent skier" who could "ski any run on the mountain."

"I'm not sure how many years he had skied, but he was quite proficient," Hudson said.

The boy was the son of Mark Henderson, associate dean of the medical school at UC Davis, and Helen Chew, leader of the UC Davis Cancer Center clinical breast cancer program.

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