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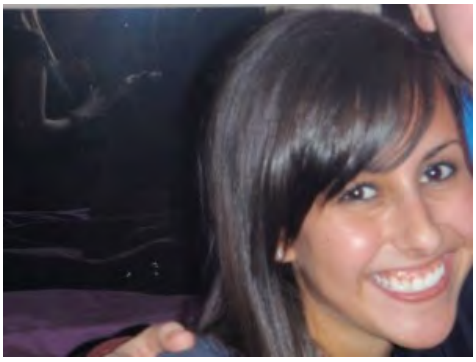
Loved ones mourn sophomore found dead in dorm

By: **Matt Rocheleau, Alyssa Creamer and Bobby Hitt** | April 06, 2010 |



UMass sophomore Nora Ruchman, 19, of Rockport, Mass., was found dead in her Coolidge Hall dorm room on Sunday, April 4. (Courtesy Facebook)

Nora Ruchman's friends and family mourned her death yesterday, remembering the 19-year-old sophomore's compassionate demeanor, sense of humor, and her contagious smile.

"She was a really nice and bubbly girl," said her roommate Alana Hallisey, a sophomore English major. "She transferred here, and I was her first roommate. It's just really a shock. I don't even really know what else to say right now. She will definitely be missed."

Ruchman, of Rockport, Mass., was found dead in her Coolidge Hall high-rise tower dorm room at 9:10 p.m. Sunday by UMass Police responding to a request about her status.

"This was an unattended death, and there is no indication of foul play," said UMass Police, according to a University statement released yesterday afternoon.

Her mother, Anita Ruchman, was reached Monday at her Rockport home.

"All I would like to say at this time is that I'm really feeling for the kids and her friends. I appreciate their love and their grief, and I just hope that they're OK," she said.

When and how Ruchman died remains unclear. UMPD Chief Johnny Whitehead said more information will follow after autopsy results return, but he did not know when the results would be available. State police are investigating the specific circumstances surrounding death, "as they do for all unattended deaths," said UMass' statement.

Questions to the state police media relations office Monday afternoon were referred to Northwestern District Attorney's Office Elizabeth D. Scheibel's Office, which was not immediately available to comment on Ruchman's death or the ongoing investigation.

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Coolidge Hall (Courtesy UMass)

Ruchman transferred to UMass this spring as a second-semester sophomore after spending three semesters at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, said a campus-wide e-mail from Dean of Students Jo-Anne T. Vanin. She did not have a declared major with the University, but was studying music, philosophy and management, the e-mail said.

"While Nora was new to our community, she joined a large community of friends from her high school who are enrolled here," said Vanin's e-mail. "Our deepest sympathies go out to Nora's mother Anita Ruchman, all of her family members and her many friends here and at home."

According to her Facebook profile, where dozens of those who knew her posted fond farewell messages yesterday, Ruchman graduated from Ipswich High School in 2008.

Coolidge residents gathered at a somber "community meeting" yesterday in the tower's 19th-floor lounge.

Grief counselors from various areas of campus life were made available to students including representatives from mental health services, the area's religious community and Coolidge Hall residence staff. In her e-mail, Vanin also said anyone seeking support services can visit the Dean of Students office at 227 Whitmore Administration Building.

Two years ago, a UMass student died in Southwest on the same date that Ruchman's body was discovered by police. On April 4, 2008, 20-year-old Liam O'Donnelly was found dead, after he fell from a 17th-floor window of the John Quincy Adams Hall tower, according to police who ruled the death was a suicide.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mrochele@dailycollegian.com. Bobby Hitt can be reached at rhitt@student.umass.edu.

One Response to "Loved ones mourn sophomore found dead in dorm"

Dawn Buchner says:
April 5, 2010 at 7:06 pm
I never had the opportunity to meet Nora, but almost felt as though I had known her, simply through the many silly memories her big sister Juliana has shared with me over the years. Each time Juliana would share her memories with me, her eyes would light up… Almost with a sense of pride you would find in the eyes of a mother recounting memories of her child. My sincere condolences go out to the entire Ruchman family as well as each of Noras friends. "May the angels guide you in little one".

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