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Student government standout dies in gun accident

By KATHERINE GAZELLA

© St. Petersburg Times, published September 5, 2001

TARPON SPRINGS -- A 26-year-old Tarpon Springs man who had been active in student government at Florida State University and had worked for state legislators died Sunday after accidentally shooting himself with a friend's pistol, police said.

TARPON SPRINGS -- A 26-year-old Tarpon Springs man who had been active in student government at Florida State University and had worked for state legislators died Sunday after accidentally shooting himself with a friend's pistol, police said.

Shawn R. McMillan was riding in the back seat of a car about 2:25 a.m. Sunday when Daniel J. Nordmark, the front seat passenger, asked McMillan for a .25-caliber pistol that was near McMillan, police said. McMillan handed the gun forward and accidentally discharged it, striking himself in the right temple, police said.

McMillan was a 1999 graduate of FSU and had attended Nova Southeastern University School of Law for a year. He was active in state politics and served as a student intern, messenger and Senate page to high-profile politicians, including former Senate President Toni Jennings and former lawmaker Curt Kiser.

He was named the director of student lobbying and the liaison between the FSU student government and the Florida Legislature.

He planned to start a new job this week at American Express, said his mother, attorney Michaela E. Mahoney.

"He was intelligent, well-read and was looking forward to his new job," she said. "He had a great future ahead of him."

Until recently, McMillan worked in his mother's law office in Dunedin.

"He did everything so quickly, I couldn't keep up with him," she said.

She said her son was never around guns and did not like guns.

"He was happy and peaceful," she said.

Police said the car McMillan was in was near Helen Ellis Memorial Hospital at the time of the shooting. Rita Nordmark, who was driving the car, took McMillan there, and he was later flown to Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg, where he died Sunday afternoon.

The death is being ruled an accidental, self-inflicted gunshot, said Sgt. Allen MacKenzie of the Tarpon Springs Police Department. He said Tuesday he was closing the case.

McMillan was born in Jacksonville. He came to Tarpon Springs in 1988 from Palm Beach Gardens and graduated from Tarpon Springs High School. He was a member of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, serving as treasurer, house manager, new member education coordinator, historian and pledge recruiter. He also was a member of the Scalp Hunters and Seminole Boosters at FSU.

Survivors include his mother, Michaela E. Mahoney, Tarpon Springs; his father, Richard Hargrave, Tarpon Springs; a brother, Daniel E. McMillan, Tarpon Springs; a maternal grandmother, Virginia Mahoney, Jupiter; and paternal grandparents, Doug and Nancy McMillan, Hightstown, N.J.

A service will be held at 3 p.m. today at the Faith Chapel of First United Methodist Church, 501 E Tarpon Ave.

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