



MEDIA RELEASE

Stroudsburg mourns loss of beloved community member NCAVP calls attention to brutal, hate-motivated murder in Pennsylvania

For Immediate Release

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Stroudsburg –the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) is saddened to learn of the murder of 21 year-old Michael Goucher, a resident of Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, a U.S. Army Veteran, an employee of the local school district and a beloved family member and friend. According to police, Mr. Goucher disappeared on February 3rd. His body was found on February 11th in a wooded area of Price Township. He had been stabbed over 50 times. This crime appears to be motivated by the defendants’ bias against Mr. Goucher’s perceived sexual orientation.

“I remember Michael for his love of his neighborhood and his care for everyone’s safety and the way he believed in what he was doing for people,” said a local resident who knew Michael. Michael, aka “Mike on a Bike” volunteered with a local bike patrol, the East Stroudsburg Crime Watch, and served as a captain. “I remember him for the gentle, kind, quiet person he was and how safe I felt walking the streets at night knowing he was out riding around,” she concluded.

Two suspects have been arrested and based on statements they have made, it appears that they arranged to meet up with Michael online and that they allegedly targeted Michael based on their perception of his sexual orientation. “This is certainly not the first time we have heard of people using the internet to intentionally select people they perceived to be gay in order to lure them out and do them harm,” said Avy Skolnik. “It is extremely disturbing and tragic. Everyone should have the right to meet people, whether online or in person, without having to live in fear of violence,” Skolnik concluded.

“We extend our sympathy to Michael’s family and friends during this tragedy and will continue to work with them and the police in Pennsylvania in any way we can. We have seen an alarming rate in the number and severity of bias crimes against the LGBTQ communities and AVP and NCAVP exist to provide support to victims and their families. The New York City Anti-Violence Project’s free and confidential 24 hour hotline staff and volunteers are available to assist victims, their families, and the local community in the aftermath of an incident,” said Sharon Stapel, Executive Director of New York City’s Anti-Violence Project. “It is important that people have information that can help ensure their safety and to know that being targeted in this way is never the fault of the victim,” she concluded.

As this is an ongoing investigation, it is not clear at this point the exact motive for this murder, however there are patterns that are consistent with bias-motivated violence, including a significant level of brutality, statements by suspects alleging sexual advances by the victim, and the method by which Michael was selected.

Anyone seeking more information about dating safety or seeking to anonymously or confidentially report any form of violence against someone because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, should contact the Anti-Violence Project at 212.714.1141.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) supports local LGBT organizations in their work to end violence in all its forms against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and communities. www.ncavp.org.

Safe is not just about sex. For more information about cruising and dating safety for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, check out our safe dating tips at www.ncavp.org.