

Pedestrian dies in early morning accident after being struck on S.R. 56

Written by Marty Randall

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A young man headed home after work around 1 a.m. on Wednesday, February 20, never reached his apartment off State Road 56 West.

Jesus Zapien Ayala, 18, who lived with friends on Willowshore Drive, was struck by a 1997 Jeep Cherokee driven by David L. Spencer-Pierce, 24, Salem. Spencer-Pierce and his co-worker, Brian Lehman of Scottsburg, were driving west on S.R. 56 when the Jeep topped a small grade just west of Westavia Boulevard at Westwood Golf Course. Spencer-Pierce said he never saw Ayala, reported to be a worker at a Mexican restaurant located in a shopping center across from the Wal-Mart. Spencer-Pierce and Lehman were also headed home after getting off work at Wal-Mart at 1 a.m.

When the Jeep hit Ayala, the man's body came up on the hood of the SUV. Spencer-Pierce told Scottsburg Patrolman Shawn Hurt that he immediately applied his brakes, sliding to a halt. Ayala fell off the Jeep onto the pavement in front of the vehicle.

Scott County EMS technicians arriving on the scene checked Ayala and advised the officer that the young man had died. Deputy Coroner Chris Fugate made the official pronouncement of death, with the body taken to Collins Funeral Home in Scottsburg. Ayala died of blunt force trauma, it was learned.

Arrangements were being made this week to ship the remains back to Mexico, advised Fugate.

The victim's cell phone and a headphone with earbuds were immediately recovered from the scene. After talking with Ayala's family, the deputy coroner contacted Scottsburg police once again. He said he had been told by family members that Ayala should have been on a skateboard. A skateboard was recovered from the south side of S.R. 56 by Fugate, but it cannot be confirmed if Ayala had been riding on it at the time of the accident, police said later.

The Jeep was impounded until Indiana State Police could reconstruct the accident. Property damage was estimated at up to \$10,000.

Ptl. Hurt was assisted at the scene by Ptl. Travis Rutherford and deputies Rex Herald and Justin Cheatham of the Sheriff's Department.