

BOY, 6, IS KILLED IN HOUSE FIRE

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, February 11, 2003
Author: CECIL ANGEL FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 6-year-old boy who fled upstairs to an attic room Monday to escape a fire became at least the eighth child to die in a fire in Detroit this year.

Jalien White, a Courville Elementary School student, died in a two-story house in the 7400 block of Kipling between Bethune and West Grand Boulevard.

"He was the best child I ever raised," said his father, Deon Coleman, 25, as he stood on a sidewalk near the burned house. "Jalien meant everything."

Firefighters received a call to the home at 7:32 p.m. Jalien's mother, Jamie Jackson, 27, also had notified the boy's father who lived nearby that their son was trapped upstairs.

Coleman said he darted to the house and, along with two other men, tried to rescue the child.

He said each of the men went upstairs repeatedly but the smoke and fire kept them from reaching the attic. Firefighters arrived and ordered them out of the house as they recovered Jalien.

Willie Robertson, who lives across the street, said he saw smoke and flames coming out of the attic window, reaching to an adjacent house. That house was not damaged.

He saw Jackson in front of the house screaming and crying. "Y'all get my baby, y'all get him, y'all get him!" Robertson said she heard her yell.

Worst of all, he said, was Jalien's pleas. "The little boy was in there hollering and crying . . . but nobody could get in there."

He heard Jackson say that her son was blackened with soot and badly burned. Firefighters had wrapped him in a blanket and a patrol car rushed him to Children's Hospital of Michigan.

"When they found Jalien it was too late," Coleman said.

He speculated that the fire was caused by candles since the boy's mother liked to keep lighted candles in the bathroom and upstairs hallway. A fire investigator said the blaze started in a second-floor bedroom in the front of the house.

Last year, 53 people were killed in Detroit fires; of those, 16 were 16 and younger.

Contact CECIL ANGEL at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3B

Index Terms: HOUSE ; FIRE ; DETROIT ; DEATH ; CHILD

Record Number: 0302110405