

STUDENT WALKING HOME SHOT DEAD BIKE GUNMAN FIRES SEVERAL TIMES INTO GROUP, KILLING 16-YEAR-OLD

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There's a purple bridesmaid's dress on the west side of Detroit that will never be fitted for the young woman who was eager to wear it.

Kim Trice Rudolph was supposed to wear the dress in two weeks in her uncle's wedding. But she was shot to death Tuesday morning as she walked home from Central High School after picking up her class schedule.

Regular classes at Central were to start today.

"She was going into the 11th grade," said Rudolph's aunt and godmother, Donna Rudolph, as the family gathered at the victim's home in the 2700 block of Fullerton. The brick duplex is about three blocks from the shooting.

Police Chief Isaiah McKinnon said Tuesday evening that police were expecting to make an arrest. "Based upon everything that's been told to investigators . . . we're fairly certain an arrest is coming shortly," he said.

Donna Rudolph said, "The last time I saw her was last night. She was curious about who she was going to walk down the aisle with."

According to police and witnesses, the 16-year-old was among several dozen young people walking north on LaSalle, in an area some said many students avoid because of heavy drug dealing and carjackings. Just north of Sturtevant, someone in the group pulled out a gun and fired into the air.

Almost immediately, one of two young men riding past on bicycles fired several shots into the crowd, hitting Kim Rudolph and possibly another person who police were looking for Tuesday night.

It was unclear whether Rudolph was a target or the victim of stray bullets.

Police won't speculate on how the young people got the guns until they know more about the incident.

"I saw some sparks. I heard a gunshot and then I heard like five more," said a student, who witnessed the shooting from a car about 100 yards away. "I heard the bullets whistling past the car. I saw somebody fall."

The student, who asked not to be identified, said he didn't see where the bike riders went after the shooting. He said he jumped from the car and ran up to Rudolph, whom he had known since middle school.

"I was trying to see where she was shot," he said, describing standing over Rudolph. "Her eyes were open. They had half rolled back in her head. She was on the curb.

"She wasn't moving, wasn't breathing," the student said. "I looked at the back of her shirt. It had two little holes in it."

McKinnon said officers had heard several accounts of events leading up to the shooting. Asked about a possible gang connection, he said: "Certainly, one of the rumors has been the involvement of youth gangs in this particular area.

"We're trying to put all the pieces together," he said.

Mayor Dennis Archer expressed outrage at the shooting.

"I am deeply saddened that a Detroit student could be gunned down two blocks from her home, on the very first day of school," he said in a news release.

Archer said police are pursuing every lead. And he asked Detroiters to watch out for all children.

"I'm asking every adult citizen, whether they are parents of growing children or not, to keep an eye on our sidewalks, streets, playgrounds and parks on behalf of our city's children," Archer continued. "The appearance of an adult on the porch, in the yard, or looking out the window while children are present, can help prevent acts of violence against our youth.

"In essence, I am asking our city to become a village that nurtures and protects Detroit's children," said Archer.

Bernard Carpenter, a senior at Central, said several groups had congregated outside the school after getting their class assignments. He said some groups taunted each other as they milled around the school. He didn't say whether Rudolph or her friends were involved or if there was any connection to the shooting.

McKinnon said security had been beefed up at Central and other high schools across the city to brace for the first day of school.

"Usually, the first day of school is the most traumatic and dangerous," McKinnon said. "The school took all the proper precautions, but it is virtually impossible to be every place."

Superintendent David Snead issued a statement saying, "Safety continues to be a primary concern of this school district." He added that "the shooting of a student on any day, especially today -- the first day of school -- certainly places a cloud over the district."

Police Inspector Harold Cureton said problems are significantly higher during the first week of school because what wasn't resolved over the summer gets resolved in hallways or classrooms.

"Everyone wants to bring their slights and vendettas back to the forefront," Cureton said.

Donna Rudolph said her brother Ricardo and his wife, Delphine, did not want to be interviewed about their daughter's death.

Kim Rudolph was one of four children; besides her parents, she is survived by a brother and two sisters.

Staff writer Jennifer Juarez Robles contributed to this report.

Caption: Photo GABRIEL B. TAIT/Detroit Free Press; Photo

: Ricardo Rudolph stands silently on his balcony Tuesday afternoon on Detroit's west side. His daughter Kim, a Central High School junior, was shot to death as she walked home with several dozen young people. Police expected to make an arrest shortly, Chief Isaiah McKinnon said Tuesday night.

Kim Rudolph

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