

## Timothy Stafford, Kalamazoo bicyclist who collided with truck on May 12, dies

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**KALAMAZOO, MI** -- Timothy Stafford, the **bicyclist who was critically injured May 12 in a collision** with a pickup truck on South Westnedge Avenue, has died from his injuries.



Timothy Stafford smiles as the rides his brand

new tricycle for the first time in this file photo from 2009. The Ambuks club donated the tricycle to Stafford, who was severely beaten by a group of people in February of that year. Kalamazoo Gazette file

Stafford, 54, died Sunday, Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety Assistant Chief Donald Webster said.

Stafford **suffered critical injuries and had been hospitalized** at Bronson Methodist Hospital after the May 12 crash.

His bicycle collided with a southbound pickup truck at the intersection of Westnedge and West Maple Street as the truck driver attempted to turn from Westnedge onto Maple.

Stafford, who was not wearing a helmet, was riding north down the hill on the sidewalk.

The impact caused Stafford to be thrown from his bike, causing head and leg injuries. He was barely conscious at the scene.

"He never really recovered from (the crash)," said Beverly Younger, Stafford's aunt who he called "Aunt Jeannie."

Younger said she acted as a mother figure to Stafford, especially after his mother died. She said Stafford had developmental disabilities and acted like a "big kid in an adult's body." He enjoyed taking apart bikes and rebuilding them, then giving them away to others, Younger said. He got a thrill out of his July birthday being a day apart from his cousin's, Younger said.

"To me, because he was born handicapped ... he was just special to me because of that," Younger said. "But I do realize he had a hard, long life, with people making fun of him and jumping on him. I just want to remember the sweet little Timmy I knew."

Stafford lived in Paw Paw as a young child, then moved to Covert and eventually to Kalamazoo when he was in middle school, Younger said. His family lived on Burr Oak Street.

In February 2009, Stafford **was beaten by a group of teenage boys** while riding his bike near the intersection of Frank Street and North Westnedge Avenue, an assault that made front-page headlines at the time. Some of the teens involved in the beating **knocked Stafford off his bike, hit him in the head** with a bottle and kicked and punched him as he lay in the street, according to witness accounts. Stafford's bike was taken but later recovered on Ada Street.

Months after the beating, **Stafford had been receiving** mental health counseling and physical therapy, and still suffered from seizures because of the attack.

Younger said after Stafford recovered from that attack, he landed a job through MRC Industries Inc. filling pop machines. He was proud of that job, Younger said.

"From that day on (the day of the 2009 attack), he always had his guard up" like he was determined not to let anyone else hurt him, Younger said. "When this accident happened, it was just so hurtful to me to see.

"The world is so cruel right now anyway and to see an accident like that, I don't know. The hardest thing to me was to see him lay there, knowing in my heart that he wasn't going to respond again."

A family-only viewing is scheduled for noon on Saturday, May 31, at Galilee Baptist Church in Kalamazoo. Funeral services are scheduled to follow at 1 p.m. at the church.

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