

Cyclist killed in Hanover called "a force for good"



Carrie Wortham



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BY REX SPRINGSTON Richmond Times-Dispatch

A force for good.

A rare talent in athletics and life.

A hard-driving achiever who worked to help others.

This is how people described Caroline “Carrie” Dawn Wortham, 26, who was hit and killed while bicycling Saturday in Hanover County.

Wortham was a St. Catherine’s School and Virginia Military Institute graduate, an award-winning athlete and a competitive dancer who planned to join the Marine Corps. She was known for her distinctive red hair and big smile.

“She was service-oriented. That was her passion, nonstop,” said her father, Dr. Edwin Wortham V, a pediatric ophthalmologist in Richmond’s Stony Point area.

Wortham, of the 13500 block of Greenwood Road in Hanover County, was biking west on Mountain Road about 11 a.m. near the intersection of Farrington Road when she was struck from behind by a 1996 Buick Century, the Hanover Sheriff’s Office said.

Wortham, who was wearing a bicycle helmet, died at the scene, officials said. The driver was uninjured. No charges had been filed as of Sunday afternoon, and authorities have not named the man who drove the car.

“There are no indications of intoxication or excessive speed, but it’s still an ongoing investigation,” said Hanover Sheriff’s Sgt. Matt Ratchford.

Wortham graduated from St. Catherine’s School in Richmond in 2008 and from VMI in 2012 with a degree in biology, her father said.

Ben Ackerly, who coached Wortham in track at St. Catherine’s, recalled a talented but humble person.

“She was a free spirit. She lived fully, with great kindness. ... She was a force for good.”

On the track team she “did almost all the events” but eventually focused on pole vaulting, Ackerly said. According to VMIkeydets.com, the athletics website of VMI, Wortham was the Big South Conference Woman of the Year for 2011-12, VMI’s first winner of that award. She could clear 3.3 meters — about 10 feet, 11 inches — in the pole vault.

Wortham was biking Saturday as training to run in the Anthem Richmond Marathon in November, her father said.

Wortham worked for two years for Midwives for Haiti, a Richmond-based nonprofit group that teaches Haitian women how to be midwives. Her work included a year in Haiti and a year in Richmond as an administrative assistant, according to her father and the group’s website.

For about the past 18 months, Wortham worked as a project coordinator for Impact Makers, a Richmond technology consulting company that donates its profits to charity.

The company aims to do good things for others, and Wortham “was doing them already for a good part of her life” before she came on board, said company Vice President Rodney Willett. He said Wortham had a “glow” to her.

Wortham was studying ballroom dancing, and she planned to become a Marine Corps officer, her father said.

Wortham recently won ballroom dancing competitions for her age and skill level in the international and country styles, said Katherine Lewis, manager of the Dance Masters studio at 5008 Lakeside Ave. in Henrico County, where Wortham studied.

“She was a champion in dancing and in life,” said Rock Foster, the studio owner.

Bob Hiatt taught European history to Wortham at St. Catherine’s. He called her “an eager student” and “just a good kid.”

“She was almost precociously aware and sensitive of stuff outside of her own experience,” Hiatt said.

“She was genuine, almost too good to be true in some ways.”

Wortham’s death came about three years after another high-profile bike case.

Lanie Kruszewski, 24, was fatally struck by a hit-and-run driver the night of July 29, 2012, as she was biking east on River Road in Richmond's West End. The driver was sentenced to three years behind bars. Wortham is survived by her father and her stepmother, Cynthia Wortham, of Hanover, and her mother, Tamara Gill, and stepfather, Harry Gill, also of Hanover. A younger brother Elliott, lives in Cleveland. "We were all privileged to really be part of her life," Edwin Wortham said. "It was a remarkably short time, but she really impacted a lot of people."

By the accident site Sunday, someone had placed a bouquet.