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Autopsy: Teen had heat stroke at summer camp, killing him

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By KGW.com Staff

BEND, Ore. – Preliminary autopsy findings in a summer camp death may lead to criminal charges for staff members.

Sergey Blashchishen, a 16-year-old Portland boy who died hiking at a Central Oregon wilderness camp late this summer, was trying to get his life back on track after dropping out of school, his mother said.

Blashchishen collapsed during a hike last while attending the SageWalk Wilderness Camp. Deputies said counselors did CPR for around 45 minutes while an Air Link ambulance was called, but the teen was declared dead at the scene.

Blashchishen had just passed a sports physical the day before.

"I don't know what to think, I still don't believe it, I still think he will come home," said Lyudmila Blashchishena of her 16-year old son.

"He kind of lost himself a little bit, because you know he dropped out of school and he didn't want to go."

But after months of searching and doing odd jobs, Blashchishena said her son wanted to get his life back on track. That's when the family discovered SageWalk, a Central Oregon camp for troubled teens.

"We liked how they advertised their treatment, adventure, discipline and everything... we thought it would be just right for him."

"I kind of inside, do not believe that a 16-year-old child, athletic, could die from hiking, even if it's 85 or 90 degrees," Sergey's Mother Lyudmila Blashchishena said. "I just really want to know the truth, what happened there."

The Bureau of Land Management suspended the permit for the wilderness camp to operate on BLM land.

An autopsy was conducted Sunday but results were not expected for several weeks.

"We do know that our EMT-trained staff worked tirelessly with the student until the AirLink emergency helicopter arrived on the scene, at which time the student's care was turned over to the AirLink medics," a statement from SageWalk said Wednesday. "SageWalk considers student safety our number one priority and takes this incident very seriously. Over the course of our 12 year history, our program has adhered to the highest standards of care and we currently meet or exceed all industry and state standards.

"We were the first wilderness program to be individually accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, and we are licensed by the State of Oregon to work with students who are experiencing issues with substance abuse and are also licensed by the State of Oregon as both an Outdoor Youth Program and Private School."

The Lake County Sheriff said the death was still under investigation.

KGW Reporter Katherine Cook contributed to this report.