

Woman died of drug overdose

A woman whose body was found beside a road near Willow Run Airport last month died of a drug overdose, the Washnetau County medical examiner has ruled.

Cynthia Sue Savage, 41, had a mixture of alcohol and heroin in her system, which led to her death, Dr. Bader Cassin said.

Savage's body was discovered Aug. 12 in weeds along Woodale Avenue in Ypsilanti Township, police said. There were no obvious signs of trauma or foul play.

Police are still investigating how her body ended up near the road, but are not treating the death as a homicide, said Washnetau County Sheriff's Cmdr. Dave Egele.

Railroad track transfer gets OK

Amtrak has agreed to support transferring the operation of 384 miles of Norfolk Southern Railway Co. tracks in Michigan and Indiana to a new company, provided that certain conditions are met.

The new company, Michigan Central Railway LLC, has applied to the federal Surface Transportation Board for permission to acquire the track. Michigan Central is controlled by another freight company, Watco Cos. Inc. of Pittsburgh, Kan. Norfolk Southern would have a minority interest in the operation.

Amtrak stated its conditional support Tuesday in documents sent to the STB.

The conditions include Michigan Central spending at least \$115 million during its first five years of operation to maintain the rail line between Ypsilanti and Kalamazoo. Eight Amtrak trains a day use the tracks, and six of those trains stop in Ann Arbor. A proposed commuter train between Ann Arbor and Detroit also would use part of the tracks.

The STB is expected to issue its decision on Michigan Central's request Oct. 25.

Ypsilanti water, sewer rates go up

Ypsilanti area residents will pay more for water and sewer services this fall.

The Ypsilanti Township Board of Trustees and the Ypsilanti City Council on Tuesday approved a 5.1 percent water rate increase and 3 percent sewer rate increase.

The rate hike is needed to offset an increase in wholesale water rates from Detroit -- as well as increases in utility costs, and salaries and benefits for the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority employees, said Larry Thomas, YCUA executive director. YCUA buys water from Detroit and sells it to customers in the city and township. The average two-month



PHOTOS: ALAN WARREN, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS
Victoria Rondeau (aka "Captain Black Vic Rondeau"), a language arts teacher at Emerson Middle School in Ann Arbor, right, leads a charge of her "Piracy Studies" students down a hallway Wednesday to storm the office of Head of School Patricia Adams during some fun on International Talk Like a Pirate Day.

Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of . . . water?

That's plunder on Talk Like A Pirate Day

BY LIZ COBBS
News Staff Reporter

Captain Black Vic Rondeau (aka Emerson Middle School teacher Victoria Rondeau,) and her band of "pirates" stormed the school's front office Wednesday afternoon.

The crew took one student "captive," and in return for his release, Emerson Head of School Patricia (Captain Dirty Dog) Adams, had to turn over her "treasure chest."

"If you give up the booty, he'd be spared," Rondeau said, in her best pirate voice.

Adams gave in. The student-pirates seized their plunder: blue water bottles Adams had in her office.

The entertaining episode was a chance for students in Rondeau's Piracy Studies elective class to participate in International Talk Like A Pirate Day.

It's not the first time Rondeau taught the piracy elective, but it's the first time the class was held on Sept. 19, when International Talk Like a Pirate Day was celebrated.

Spurred by her interest in pirates and influenced by the popular "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies, Rondeau said, she wanted to create an electives class that was both educational and fun.

"Historically speaking, I wanted to teach about the things that made them become pirates," Rondeau said a short while after the front-office raid.

Students learn about the life of historical pirates as well as



Language arts teacher Victoria Rondeau (aka "Captain Black Vic Rondeau"), helps student Amber Mukherjee, 13, with her pirate costume on International Talk Like a Pirate Day at Emerson School.

current-day pirates, such as those operating in the Malacca Strait, off the coast of Malaysia, and off the coast of Somalia.

Rondeau's students give the elective class high marks.

"I think it's cool. It's awesome," said Amber Mukherjee, 13, an eighth-grader who posed for pictures outside the school with her fellow mates.

Matteo Todisco, a 12-year-old seventh-grader said that he not only enjoys the class, he liked that Wednesday's events involved the whole school.

Other teachers and staff joined in the fun, dressing like pirates for the day.

Rondeau also teaches eighth-grade language arts and social studies and Latin to sixth-, sev-

enth- and eighth-graders. Prior to donning her pirate costume, Rondeau wore a toga with a wreath around her head during the "naming ceremony" for first-year students in her Latin class who chose their "Roman names."

After the ceremony, she put a black coat and hat on and switched back to speaking pirate.

"It's tough, lecturing with 'Arrr' and 'Me hearties,'" said Rondeau, who used non-salty pirate language most of the day. "It's also hard to lecture with an eye patch on."

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