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Student killed in Bellevue car crash

Blythe Lawrence
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Junior Robert Vasen was one of a closely knit group of friends who graduated from Bellevue High in 2003.

Not all of them went to the UW, but when Vasen died Sunday night after the BMW he was riding in was t-boned by a Jeep Cherokee in Bellevue, friends from across the country dropped everything to rush home and be at his side. One flew in from Spain.

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It's a testament to how much Vasen meant to people, friends said.

"He's just one of those people no one could say anything bad about," his friend Rudy Willingham said. "He was just the best guy ever. Everyone he met was his friend."

Vasen, 20, was one of 10 people involved in the crash. The BMW had four other passengers, while the Jeep Cherokee was carrying six.

Police suspect alcohol may have been involved in causing the accident. Drivers of both vehicles were arrested at the scene of the crash. The driver of the Jeep is being held in custody, while the driver of the BMW was released.

Willingham and others described Vasen as a sincere person with an infectious smile and sincere manner that immediately put others at ease.

"You could not see him for four months and then see him on the street and it would be like he hadn't missed a beat," said David Cahill, who knew Vasen since they were in kindergarten.

Vasen, was a gifted soccer player who Cahill believes could have played professionally.

While at camp one summer, Vasen began complaining of burning pains in his leg, said junior Jon Everist, who knew him since the two were in fifth grade.

Vasen had described the resulting staph infection as the worst pain of his life, Everist said. During the next few years Vasen was in and out of hospitals for physical therapy and numerous surgeries on his leg.

Though he sometimes had trouble straightening it, he persevered and made the varsity basketball team his senior year of high school.

"He had the drive to be successful in whatever he did," Everist said.

At the UW, Vasen majored in economics and accepted an unpaid internship doing event planning at Virginia Mason last summer.

Memorial services for Vasen will be held today at 5 p.m. at the Temple B'nai Torah in Bellevue in

Crossroads.

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