



Grant County News

"Where Grant County Comes Together" Online



Williamstown, Kentucky

Sunday, June 27, 2004



www.weather.com

Sections

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Classifieds
- Local Business Advertising
- Obituaries
- Columns
- School
- Business
- Calendar
- Archives
- Contact Us
- Guestbook
- Church
- Express
- Kids & Teens
- Subscribe
- Births
- Engagements

Links:

Chamber of Commerce

TV Listings

Archive Search:



News

A day of hiking turns tragic

Dry Ridge man drowns at Lake Williamstown

By Jamie Baker-Nantz - Editor

While boaters and water skiers were seeking fun on a sunny afternoon on Williamstown Lake on June 21, divers from the Grant County and Boone County Water Rescue teams were searching for the body of a Dry Ridge man.

Kenny Straub, 24, disappeared in the water as he and a friend, John

Dover, of Williamstown, attempted to swim across one of the lake's coves just before 1 p.m.

His body wasn't recovered from the murky waters until 2 a.m. on June 22 after divers used an underwater camera to locate him.

Dover, of Williamstown, told police the pair had been hiking near the lake and decided the hillside across from them would be better because it was free of briars and dense growth.

They both entered the water wearing jeans and boots and began swimming across.

Dover told police they didn't get far from shore when Straub said he was turning back. Dover said he also headed back to shore and then he heard Straub begin yelling for help. He went under the water and disappeared, Dover told police.



Members of the Boone County Water Rescue team and Department of Fish and Wildlife talk with John Dover about the location where he last saw his friend, Kenny Straub. Straub drowned at Lake Williamstown on June 21. Photo by Jamie Baker-Nantz - Editor



Skyway Realty & Development



Grant County News Rates and Survey Res are available at lcnl.com/mediakit/g





Dover climbed a steep driveway in search of a phone but no one was home, so he ran nearly a quarter mile to Humes Ridge Road to summon help.

The Grant County Water Rescue team arrived on scene around 1:15 p.m. and began taking turns diving in the spot where Dover told them he last saw his friend. He was taken on the water by boat to give the divers direction.

They would descend in the water and hover just off the bottom and use their hands to search. By using ropes to communicate with rescue personnel in the boat, they were able to search in a grid.

"This is a meticulous type of work," said Rick Willoby, director of Grant County Emergency Management. "It's almost like looking for a needle in a haystack."

While some helped with the diving efforts, other members of the Williamstown Fire Department and Fish and Wildlife officers combed the banks looking for Straub.

A cadaver dog from the Grand Paws Search Dog Team in Owen County was taken by boat around the cove. Cadaver dogs are used to sniff for gases and odors given off by humans when they are in water.

The dog did indicate or "hit" on a couple of spots that divers focused on. Divers had a difficult time searching the water because it was muddy.

"It's black water," said Willoby. "You can't see your hand in front of your face when it's like that."

The Grant County Water Rescue Team searched for over four hours, before a dozen members of the Boone County Water Rescue team arrived with two underwater cameras.

They took Dover out in a boat and around the cove to retrace his steps for them.

"We tried to get him to pinpoint where he was. That's where we focused on," Willoby said.

The rescue team, then, put the cameras in the water. Because they are designed for underwater use, they cameras were able to spotlight a nearly two foot area.

Willoby said the divers thought they spotted him in the water around midnight, but it wasn't until 2 a.m. when Straub's body was recovered in eight to 12 feet of water about 35 feet from the shore.

"He was found pretty close to where we thought he was," Willoby

said.

Coroner Marylee Willoby ruled Straub's death an accident.

"We don't have any reason to believe it was anything but a tragic accident," she said.

An autopsy will be performed. Toxicology reports won't be available for several weeks.

Willoby said a drowning can occur in less than five minutes, depending on the size of the victim and the water temperature.

"In some cases where the water was extremely cold a person might be revived if found in under an hour, but with warm water, it's unlikely you'll revive a victim after they've been under water even for five minutes," she said.

The fact that Straub was wearing boots and jeans also hindered his ability to swim.

"Even a good swimmer would have problems swimming with that much clothing and their boots on," she added.

Rick Willoby cautioned the public about the use of life jackets.

"When you get in the water, whether boating or swimming you need to have a life jacket on. It's hot, but it could save your life," he said.

As with any death that occurs on a Kentucky lake or stream, a law enforcement office from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife investigated the accident.

Bobby Newman, Grant County's officer was assisted by Assistant Chief Chris Hankins of the Williamstown Police Department.

The last drowning which occurred on Williamstown Lake happened on July 19, 2001 when Rod Denny of Demossville drowned after the boat he was riding in sank near Williamstown Marina. Divers searched for Denny's body for several days, but couldn't locate him. It finally came to the surface nearly three weeks later.

"This is just a tragedy but I'm glad we recovered his body, so that his family didn't have to keep waiting," Willoby said.

[Print this story](#)

[Email this story](#)

Copyright Grant County News. All rights reserved.

