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Tyrell Williams

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Iraq veteran killed in hit-and-run was starting new life in Austin

Tyrell Williams, 1976-2008

By Matt Presser
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Thursday, February 21, 2008

After three tours of duty in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps, Sgt. Tyrell Williams moved to Austin to start a new chapter of his life in the city to which he had always dreamed of returning.

He had moved into a house in Northwest Austin, applied to Austin Community College and set up job interviews for last week.

But on Feb. 11, he was struck and killed by two cars, Austin police said. Williams' mother said he was walking home from a sports bar. One driver remained at the scene, police said, but the other left.

Ten days later, police still are looking for information on what happened to Williams, 31, as his family copes with the loss of a man who they say was the happiest he had ever been.

"He loved Austin. That was just his happy space," said his mother, Dayton Williams, a Bryan resident who lived in Austin with him more than 10 years ago. "He was excited to start his life, (and) it was just the place where he wanted to be."

Police say one car hit Williams sometime after 10:30 p.m. and another about 11 p.m. in the 12100 block of Waters Park Road, near the intersection of MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1) and Parmer Lane. Police would not say whether the second driver has been charged or will face charges. Because it's an ongoing investigation, police wouldn't discuss other details of the case, the fourth traffic fatality of 2008.

Williams joined the Marines in 2003 and was honorably discharged in November. He wasn't obligated to return to Iraq a third time, but he wanted to care for the younger Marines, said 1st Sgt. Aaron McDonald.

"He saw some Marines that needed someone, and he knew he could help," McDonald said. "No one waved a bonus in his face or a promotion or a medal. He just searched his soul and made a decision to help out these guys."

Shae Williams, 33, said her brother was "hit hard" by Sept. 11, 2001, and felt he could make a difference.

"The most surprising thing, of course, is that he does three tours of duty in Iraq and comes back safely and then this happens," she said.

On Saturday, a group of friends and family attended a funeral service and gathered at his house to celebrate his life. A graveside ceremony is scheduled for 11 a.m. Monday at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

Anyone with information on the case is asked to call Austin police Detective Mark Breckenridge at 974-5516.

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