

Norwood student killed in avalanche

Slide occurred Saturday in the La Sal Mountains

By Katie Klingsporn

Editor

Mar 6, 2012

An 18-year-old Norwood High School student was killed on Saturday in an avalanche in the La Sal Mountains in Utah.

Garrett Carothers, a Redvale resident, was snowmobiling with three companions in the Beaver Basin area of the La Sals when the avalanche broke, sweeping him and his machine down a steep gully and burying him, according to a press release from the Grand County Sheriff's Office in Utah.

His death marks the 25th avalanche fatality in the U.S. this winter and the fifth in Utah, according to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

A candlelight vigil for Carothers was held Sunday night at Norwood High School. Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Monday at Norwood High School, and will be followed by a potluck supper in the school's all-purpose room. Community members attending are welcome to bring a side dish.



According to a report from the Utah Avalanche Center, Carothers and three others set out on a snowmobile tour from Gateway early on Saturday, heading up into Beaver Basin in the La Sal Mountains.

- ⊗ On their way into the basin, the party didn't notice signs of instability, but snow conditions got deeper as they traveled higher and on several occasions members of the group had to dig out their snowmobiles. A recent snowstorm had dropped about



two feet of snow on the mountains.)

Eventually, the snow got so deep that it hindered travel. The party decided to turn around, but the road they were traveling was too steep to maneuver around on, so they continued toward a meadow with the intention of turning around there.

According to the report, the summer road into Beaver Basin crosses numerous avalanche paths, including one that sits near that particular meadow.

The first two snowmobilers crossed this avalanche path and regrouped in a more protected part of the meadow. As the third began to traverse, the first two riders noticed “snow dust” coming down the avalanche path as a slide started to break. Carothers, who was fourth, then crested the steep hill and entered the avalanche. A debris and powder cloud obscured the others’ vision for nearly 30 seconds, according to the report, and when the snow settled, their companion was nowhere in sight. The slide occurred at roughly 10:30 a.m.

The party began searching for him immediately, but only had one beacon, one probe and two shovels. Carothers was reportedly not wearing a beacon. His companions probed and dug for nearly two hours in a steep gully where avalanche debris was more than 30 feet deep in places before retreating back toward Gateway to find cell phone service. They contacted the Grand County Sheriff’s Office at around 2 p.m.

The Sheriff’s Office contacted Search and Rescue teams and an avalanche team and requested a helicopter to assist in the search. The Mesa County [Colorado] Search and Rescue team was also contacted to assist in the search, and a hasty rescue operation was launched.

Members of the Grand County Winter Search and Rescue were flown to the site, and conducted a probe search in likely burial spots in the ravine, according to the report. Eventually, a searcher struck what turned out to be Carothers’ snowmobile with a

probe. The machine was dug up and uncovered. By that time, it was getting dark and the rescue party was forced to retreat for the night.

On Sunday morning, according to the report, a large group of Mesa County and Grand County Search and Rescue team members arrived on scene. More than 50 rescuers contributed their time and effort in the search, and were eventually able to locate Carothers about three feet uphill from his snowmobile. He had been buried under at least 12 feet of avalanche debris, according to the report.

“Through the efforts of multiple agencies and extremely skilled personnel, resolution was brought to this tragic incident,” said a release from the Grand County Sheriff’s Office.

The avalanche was 700 feet wide and ran 1,000 feet, according to the Utah Avalanche Center, with a crown depth that ranged from one to four feet.