

Alaska Dispatch News

Published on *Alaska Dispatch News* (<http://www.adn.com>)

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Devin Kelly ^[1]

January 7, 2014

Main Image Credit:

Main Image Caption:

Eldridge Griffith, who police identified Tuesday as the bicyclist killed in a collision with a car last week, was a retired state youth counselor and avid cyclist who for decades rode his bike in Anchorage year-round, people who knew him said.

On Thursday, Griffith, 65, was crossing Northern Lights Boulevard from the north when he was struck in the middle lane by a gray Subaru, police said. Officers and paramedics found Griffith unconscious, and he was pronounced dead at a hospital.

Police are still investigating the circumstances of the crash, and no citations or charges have been issued, police spokeswoman Jennifer Castro said in an email. Griffith's name was released Tuesday after police contacted his out-of-state family, Castro said.

Also known as "Griff," Griffith was for many years a fixture as an at-risk youth counselor at McLaughlin Youth Center, where he began working in 1976, said Kathy Shankel, program superintendent at the center and a former colleague of Griffith's on the boys' treatment unit. Griffith retired in 2001.

His open manner and sense of humor endeared him to the juvenile inmates -- he tended to address each one as "young master," Shankel said.

"He was always on the side of the underdog," Shankel said. "That's maybe the reason why he worked so well with the kids here."

The California native also rode his bicycle to work year-round, long before studded tires were widely used.

"He was ahead of his time in that department," Shankel said. She added: "Griff did die doing what he loved, which was bicycling."

Griffith's face was recognizable in Anchorage's cycling community, as were his taped bunny boots, black snowboarding helmet and backpack, said Chris Wineck, a service manager at the Bicycle Shop on Northern Lights Boulevard, where Griffith had been a regular customer for about 30 years.

About a year and a half ago, Griffith bought the bike he was riding at the time of the accident, a blue and white Redline model, Wineck said.

Griffith changed his tires in the spring and fall, and always sat and chatted while Wineck worked.

"We're going to miss him for sure," Wineck said.

Reach Devin Kelly at dkelly@adn.com ^[2] or 257-4314.

By DEVIN KELLY
dkelly@adn.com ^[2]

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[2] <mailto:dkelly@adn.com>