



Sunny to
partly cloudy
57/40

Santa Cruz Sentinel

WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 14, 2011

\$1.00

Serving Santa Cruz
County since 1856

California's Best Community Newspaper: Calif. Newspaper Publishers Assoc.

WWW.SANTACRUZSENTINEL.COM

An edition of the **San Jose Mercury News**

CAPITOLA HOMICIDE

Stabbing victim worked with vets, studied to be an EMT

Friends describe Aaron Carpenter as energetic, with a huge heart

By **STEPHEN BAXTER**

sbaxter@santacruzsentinel.com

CAPITOLA — The 36-year-old Capitola man killed Sunday was a U.S. Army veteran who was studying to be an emergency medical technician at Cabrillo College, his friends and family said.

Ronald Aaron Carpenter was found

dead in a home on the 3200 block of Virgil Lane just before 11 p.m. Sunday. Early Monday, police arrested 23-year-old Marcos Robert Chavez on suspicion of Carpenter's murder. Chavez lived at a studio apartment adjacent to the home. He will be arraigned today.

Kat Hill, Carpenter's mother, said by phone from Oregon that she could not

believe her son had been killed.

"How could this happen?" she asked.

Hill said her son visited her in November and that he was planning to move from Capitola to Maui at the end of December to work and continue scuba diving and surfing. Carpenter's friends



SEE CARPENTER ON A3
CARPENTER

CARPENTER

Continued from A1

described him as energetic and giving. He did work-study at the Santa Cruz County Veterans Center on 41st Avenue.

"I love the guy. He had a huge heart," said Chris Lopez, one of Carpenter's surfing buddies and an Army veteran who had worked at the vet center with him.

"I spent my whole day crying," Lopez said. "He's definitely going to be missed."

The Coroner's Office has not yet released Carpenter's cause of death, but police said that he had been stabbed and suffered bruises and abrasions.

Capitola detective Marquis Booth said Tuesday that police and investigators from the District Attorney's Office

BORN: Jan. 4, 1975

DIED: Dec. 11, 2011

HOME: Capitola

OCCUPATION: Paramedic and fire technology student at Cabrillo College

EDUCATION: Bend (Ore.) Senior High School

MILITARY SERVICE: U.S. Army from 1999 to 2000, was discharged after being injured.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Worked at the Santa Cruz County Veterans Center, participated in veterans events. He enjoyed surfing and scuba diving.

SURVIVORS: Mother Kat Hill of Vale, Ore., father Ronald Carpenter of Bend, Ore., sister Lynda Carpenter of Arlington, Va., stepmother Cathy Carpenter of Bend, Ore., stepfather David Hill of Vale, Ore.

SERVICES: Jan. 4 in Vale, Ore.

DONATIONS: Organizations that support disabled veterans

and the Department of Justice continued to collect evidence from the apartment inside the well-maintained house on

a quiet residential street. He declined to give details on the investigation.

"It's still a very fresh and

sensitive investigation," Booth said. "There are still a lot of unanswered questions."

Police have not said how Carpenter and Chavez knew each other nor given a possible motive for Carpenter's slaying.

Carpenter was born in Bend, Ore. His mother was in the Navy and they moved several times before Carpenter graduated from Bend Senior High School in 1993. Carpenter joined the U.S. Army in late 1999.

Carpenter was stationed in Texas when he injured his back and shoulder jumping out of a truck. He was briefly stationed in South Korea before his honorable discharge in 2000 because of his injury.

Diane Lucy, who lives in Chico and is a friend of Carpenter's family, said that Car-

penter had wanted to join the military for years and the injury crushed him.

"That just broke his heart," Lucy said.

Carpenter then moved to Santa Cruz County. Friends said he was excited to surf, scuba dive and chase a new goal of becoming an emergency medical technician. In fall 2009, Carpenter enrolled in the paramedic EMT program at Cabrillo College with a major in fire technology, Cabrillo spokeswoman Kristin Fabos said. He had not yet completed his classes.

He worked at the veterans center in Capitola as part of his work-study. Veterans often walked in with questions about Veterans Affairs medical appointments and other matters and Carpenter would help them navigate the system.

"He was definitely very enthusiastic and very helpful," said Jeremiah Ridgeway, who also worked at the center. "He would go the extra mile. It's not really our job to make calls (for clients), but he was down there making appointments for people."

Friends said Carpenter recently sold his Toyota pickup for about \$2,000 because he planned to move to Maui at the end of December. He planned to work, surf and scuba dive — as he often did around Monterey.

Carpenter's mother said she planned to have a memorial event in Oregon on Jan. 4 — his birthday.

She said he wanted to earn a pilot's license in Maui and fly helicopters. She said her son's death was unbelievable.

"He was going to learn to fly," she said. "He dreamed big."