

High-rise tragedy claims budding chef



Man, 23, known for his smile, 'big heart'

Derian Mericle, of Whirled Peas catering company, hugs fellow event manager Stephen Tanner on Wednesday in their Commerce City office after learning of the death of

co-worker Brian Thompson. The up-and-coming chef lost his footing and fell from atop a 13th-floor balcony wall during a party Tuesday night at Brooks Tower near 15th and Curtis streets. Police ruled the fall an accident. Mericle said Thompson was a perfectionist and "destined for greatness." **5**

Young chef dies in fall from condo tower

Caterer, 23, slipped from balcony and plunged 10 stories

By Sarah Langhein
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

COMMERCE CITY — In the last moments of his life, Brian Thompson, a promising young chef, stood on a 13th floor balcony.

He had just wrapped up a catering event Tuesday night with co-workers at Whirled Peas and decided to attend a party instead of going home.

Inside a Brooks Tower condominium at 1020 15th St., someone saw Thompson lose his footing atop the short wall encircling the balcony and plunge out of sight, friends said.

He fell 10 stories to his death, landing next to the third-floor swimming

pool about 9:30 p.m.

Police ruled his death an accident. It's unknown if alcohol was a factor.

Police said Wednesday no crime was committed, although they were working to interview people who were at the party as well as any other witnesses.

Thompson's co-workers pleaded to gether news of his death through friends, television reports and police.

Derian Mericle, an event manager at Whirled Peas, began calling hospitals. "He was just destined for greatness," Mericle said. "There was so much potential there."

She had seen him at work an hour before he died.

In keeping with his personality, Thompson hugged her, and said, "Derian, it was a pleasure working with you."

Thompson, an executive off-premise chef, was Whirled Peas' first employee, joining forces with President Nick Agre and Vice President

Marc DesRosiers.

He was a workplace favorite, having the enthusiasm that motivated his co-workers and the work ethic that was envied. "He was always working 100 hours a week on salary," said Tom Udesky, human relations director for the catering company.

"He loved it here."

Thompson was a man who packed as much as he could into a day.

He drove around in a car loaded with gear, including his skis, so he could squeeze in some time on the slopes if work wrapped up early.

"He didn't skimp on anything," Udesky said.

"Most people go through their lives and never meet someone with that much passion."

Added chef Jeff Carson: "He did as much in 23 years as most people do in their whole lives."

On Wednesday, Whirled Peas sent Thompson's family a letter of condolence.

Last moments of caterer's life



Brian Thompson lost his footing on a balcony on the 13th floor of a Brooks Tower condominium and fell to his death Tuesday, according to a witness.



Fall: Chef called a perfectionist

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out a letter to friends of the catering company. "Words are simply not sufficient to describe the terrific individual who was Brian Thompson," the letter said. "No vocabulary exists to describe the size of Brian's heart."

They tried to anyway.

But his co-workers didn't have to: Their tears told the story.

To them, Thompson was a perfectionist who took time to personally train new employees and make events just right.

"He made you want to be a better person," Mericle said.

But sometimes the older and wiser Thompson gave way to the "party ani-

mal."

Then, they counted on him for a good laugh and his smile that lit up the room. Still, he always put others first, whether it was giving up time to sit with a sick friend in the hospital or just fully listening to someone's story.

"His heart was so big," event manager Stephen Tanner said.

Thompson's "family" at Whirled Peas has planned a memorial service that will be open to the public.

It will be from 9 a.m. to noon Sunday at the Riverfront, 2852 W. Bowles Ave., Littleton.

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