

Written by Administrator
Monday, 26 June 2017 11:07 -

Brett Casino, the former director of Manteno's Campus Life and pastor of Calvary Bible Church in Bourbonnais, died Friday at his apartment in Kankakee.

The Kankakee County coroner could not give a preliminary cause of death and said it might be weeks before they know how the 38-year-old died.

Casino was born Sept. 3, 1978, the son of Sharon and Robert Casino. He studied criminal justice at Kankakee Community College, and was a dispatcher and auxiliary police officer for five years at the Bourbonnais Police Department before joining Youth for Christ in 2004.

Casino established Youth for Christ's Campus Life program at Manteno Church of the Nazarene. He often connected with Manteno Middle School students by attending their sporting events and band concerts. He occasionally was seen handing out doughnuts before school and, sometimes, donned his karate uniform, including his black belt, putting his karate training on display.

Through two stints with Campus Life, Casino grew the program to more than 200 children.

"Brett's passion to reach young people with the Christian message was powerful," said Rick Selk, executive director of the South Pointe Youth for Christ. "He always spoke to these kids with his heart. So many of them came from families where Christian faith wasn't a priority. Brett connected with them. He was very passionate about giving the kids any help he could."

In between stints at Campus Life, Casino was a pastor of student ministries at Calvary Bible Church. Through Calvary Bible, he helped serve a church in Haiti and led local efforts to assist the country following an earthquake in 2010.

In addition to his work with Campus Life and Calvary Bible, Casino was once a martial arts instructor at Tri-Star Martial Arts Academy in Bradley, where he earned a second degree black belt. He also was a special education worker at Camelot Therapeutic Day School.

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"He has always been a nice guy, a shirt-off-the-back kind of guy," Tri-Star owner Duane Brumitt said. "He was a loving dad to his two children. When he taught a class, he had the students' best interest at heart and was very professional."

Casino was just a teenager when he met Manteno native Brandon Myers through karate at Lemners Soo Bahk Do in Bradley. Myers, who knew Casino for 25 years, reconnected with him when his son, Damon, joined Campus Life.

"Brett was always smiling, always happy, always positive and always Christ-centered," Myers said. "He wasn't shy about sharing he was a Christian, and he knew how to talk to kids. Kids were willing to open up to him because of his compassion. Deep down, Brett was a very caring person who was focused on helping and saving other people."

Casino is survived by his two children, his ex-wife, a brother and his parents. Visitation for Casino will be from 5 to 7 p.m. on July 3 at Gathering Point Church in Bourbonnais. A service and celebration will follow.

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