

“Summer will end soon enough, and childhood as well.”
GEORGE R.R. MARTIN AUTHOR

New Haven man identified as victim of electrocution at Golf Course

BY JAKE ROBBINS AND ADELE HAEG
STAFF REPORTERS

The man who died while working at Yale’s golf course last week was identified Friday as Luis Alberto Morocho Marcatoma, 54, of New Haven.

Yale’s head of public safety, Duane Lovello, released Marcatoma’s name in an email to the News. Marcatoma, a contractor working on a restoration project at the Yale Golf Course, died on Thursday, Aug. 21, after being electrocuted by a downed power line, according to a previous statement from Yale’s media office.

The Yale Police Department did not identify the victim for a week after the incident. The Connecticut medical examiner’s office, which deemed the electrocution death an accident, has declined to name him.

Marcatoma was born in Ecuador and moved to New Haven two years ago, according to an online obituary posted Tuesday. He spent most of his life in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and lived in Spring Valley, N.Y., for a year

before arriving in New Haven, the tribute says.

The obituary describes Marcatoma as a devoted husband, father and grandfather who cherished spending time with his loved ones. He enjoyed watching volleyball and soccer and “very much appreciated nature, the green fields, lakes and wild animals,” the obituary says.

In his eyes, the obituary says, “everything was beautiful,” and he encouraged others to value God.

Marcatoma’s family and friends held a visitation time at a North Haven funeral home on Wednesday, according to plans outlined in the Tuesday obituary.

Marcatoma is survived by his wife, three children, seven siblings and a large extended family in Ecuador and the United States, according to the obituary.

He was expected to be buried in Ecuador.

The News was not immediately able to contact Marcatoma’s family.

The circumstances surrounding the electrocution incident — including the nature of Marcatoma’s

work — remain unclear. Yale Police Chief Anthony Campbell ’95 DIV ’09 previously told the News that Lovello, Yale’s top public safety administrator, had personally examined the scene.

“There is no additional information being released at this time,” Lovello wrote Friday in the email identifying Marcatoma.

Eastern Land Management President and CEO Bruce Moore Jr. expressed sympathy for the victim on Monday, August 25 in a statement to the News without naming him.

“Our focus has been supporting our employee’s family and our team members that were affected by this tragic accident,” Moore wrote.

The Yale University Golf Course, which has been closed for restoration since 2023, is located at 200 Conrad Dr.

Sabrina Thaler contributed reporting.

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JAKE ROBBINS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Luis Alberto Morocho Marcatoma, 54, was born in Ecuador and spent most of his life there, according to an obituary describing him as a lover of the outdoors.

New Haven continues flood mitigation efforts despite FEMA cuts

BY KINNIA CHEUK
STAFF REPORTER

By 2050, New Haven can expect to see up to 20 inches of sea level rise from the late-20th century average, according to estimates from the Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation, or CIRCA.

But it might not take that long for New Haven residents to feel the water rising.

“Before New Haven is submerged, the losses due to this more frequent flooding will have driven people to move,” James O’Donnell, executive director of CIRCA, said.

New Haven has seen a number of unusually severe floods in the past few years, including severe flooding from Hurricane Ida in early September 2021. Since then, the city has dedicated hundreds of millions of federal dollars to expanding flood prevention infrastructure, including downtown drainage systems and a flood wall protecting I-95.

As hurricane season continues in full force, the News spoke with scientists and city leaders about ongoing efforts to mitigate flooding in New Haven and account for recent cuts to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.

Sea level rise multiplies flooding risk

Scientists are able to anticipate the tidal forces that drive fluctuations in water level, but severe storms and hurricanes cause changes in water level that defy these regular fluctuations.

These storms are what cause flooding in coastal cities like New Haven, O’Donnell said.

In the worst case scenario, by 2050, New Haven’s mean sea level will be 20 inches higher than the baseline sea level — an average of mean sea levels between 1983 and 2001. A more likely estimate would still put the city’s mean sea level at more than 10 inches higher than the baseline, according to O’Donnell’s research.

The prediction is very similar for many other Connecticut cities along the Long Island Sound, including Bridgeport and New London.

Even small increments of mean sea level rise can cause anomalously high sea levels to become much more frequent, significantly raising a community’s risk of flooding, O’Donnell said.

New Haven is very unlikely to be fully submerged in water in the near future. Instead, the real danger of mean sea level rise is more frequent flooding, O’Donnell said.

City speeds ahead with flood infrastructure, despite uncertainty

New Haven has long invested in green stormwater infrastructure and flood mitigation efforts, Giovanni Zinn, New Haven city engineer, said.

But one of the city’s largest flood mitigation projects stalled indefinitely after FEMA ended its Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, or BRIC, in April.

In 2022, New Haven received \$25 million through BRIC, supplemented by \$10 million in state funds, to construct a reinforced drainage system from under the railyard downtown to

the harbor. The proposed pipe would also connect to the Long Wharf pump station as part of an Army Corps of Engineers project.

While New Haven has already received around \$380,000 in funds from FEMA and wrapped up the design phase of the project, it has not secured a contract for the second phase, which would allow the city to access the bulk of the funding, Zinn said.

“The problems we have are very real, and they’re very present today, and we would have to keep working on other avenues for funding,” Zinn said. “The city wouldn’t be able to foot the whole thing itself, it would rely on state programs or other federal programs.”

Connecticut and 19 other states are currently suing the Trump administration over the funding cuts, which they allege to be “unlawful.”

“Until some of the funding cuts, we had a very robust program that a lot of other communities wanted to learn more about and understand what we were doing,” Zinn said.

New Haven’s massive \$160 million project to build a flood barrier, flood gates and a new pump station to protect I-95, Union Station and the railyard from future storm surge will remain intact, Zinn told the News. The project is led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Moreover, two “living shoreline” projects in East Shore Park and Long Wharf Park, each around 3,000 feet in length, have just gone through the permitting process and are approved for construction in the next year, Zinn added.



CHRISTINA LEE
As sea level rise compounds flooding risk in New Haven, local leaders continue to push mitigation efforts despite federal cuts.

Living shorelines, alternatives to traditional concrete seawalls that prevent flooding, use natural materials to mitigate rising sea levels, according to nonprofit Save the Sound.

Zinn stressed the importance of the many “little projects” the city has been doing to mitigate the impacts of storms.

To date, the city has installed almost 200 bioswales downtown to divert rainwater out of storm sewer systems to deal with the increased frequency of intense rain events, according to Zinn.

State climate laws incorporate flood risk into planning

New climate laws signed into law by Gov. Ned Lamont in June require key state and local documents to take into account the impacts of climate change and sea level rise in zoning and planning.

The new state regulations increase the amount of informa-

tion that insurers are required to provide to homeowners or renters, including the availability of flood insurance, said Charles Rothenberger, director of Connecticut Government Relations at Save the Sound.

“It tries to steer, gently, residential development away from the most sensitive areas,” Rothenberger said.

The act also authorizes municipalities to create “resiliency improvement districts” that allow for additional property tax overlay to help finance local projects that protect infrastructure from the effects of climate change.

New Haven is currently not planning any resiliency improvement districts, Steven Winter, director of the city’s Office of Climate and Sustainability told the News.

The Connecticut coastline spans more than 600 miles.

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Organizations gather to call attention to opioid overdoses

BY MICHELLE SO
STAFF REPORTER

As Fiona Firine, the president and co-founder of For Cameron, explained the origin of her nonprofit organization, she handed visitors to her booth on the New Haven Green purple ribbons joined neatly with golden safety pins — symbols of solidarity for drug overdose awareness.

Firine and the other women at the table had lost loved ones due to the opioid crisis. After being prescribed opioids after a football injury at age 12, Firine’s son, Cameron, struggled for decades before coming clean. He was studying to become a recovery coach at Gateway Community College but relapsed. Cameron died in 2018, at age 27, from a fentanyl pressed pill.

“Even though we’re a very shy family, we decided we needed to go public, because if this could happen to us, it could happen to anybody,” Firine said.

For Cameron and over 25 other organizations filled the Chapel Street and Church Street corner of the Green on Friday with tents and loud music for a public health and wellness fair.

The annual observance of International Overdose Awareness Day,

organized by Cornell-Scott Hill Health Center and the New Haven Health Department, united under the theme “One Big Family, Driven by Hope.” Health care professionals, family members and resource officers aimed to destigmatize drug users and remember those who were lost in the drug crisis.

At 1:15 p.m., an hour into the event, Mayor Justin Elicker offered remarks, along with Connecticut Comptroller Sean Scanlon, New Haven public health director Maritza Bond and others.

“I think every one of us knows at least one person that is struggling with substance use disorder, with addiction right now, and it is tragic to see the number of people that we have lost in our community over the years,” Elicker said.

Elicker went on to praise New Haven’s drug response program, police training and New Haven Free Public Library staffers — who he said “have used Narcan to save people’s lives in the library.”

Scanlon, following Elicker, nodded to the federal cuts to Medicaid, calling the program “the single largest insurer in the United States of America for treating people with mental illness and substance-use disorder.” Under a Cornell-Scott Hill

Health Center tent, Melissa Zuppari stretched across a multicolored array of yoga mats. She has worked with the health center for over 16 years and recently became the assistant program director for its new Recovery and Wellness Center.

“This has affected my life, between friends, family, loved ones in many different areas, since the 2000s, and prescription pain medications were kind of driving up overdose rates and substance use disorders,” Zuppari said. “So I got into this field just by having a lot of friends who used and I professionally and personally lost multiple people.”

The Recovery and Wellness Center offers over 50 beds to recovering addicts and provides services including dental care, recovery coaches and psychiatric services.

Zuppari said her goal is to humanize drug treatment and make sure people who are using drugs understand that the goal of many treatment facilities is to help, not to scold.

“We need to reduce shame and stigma so people are able to come forward and ask for help,” Zuppari said.

Under another tent, Kathy Eggert, the director of the APT Foundation, oversaw her staff and volunteers taking people’s blood pressures, training



MICHELLE SO / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Representatives from over 25 organizations gathered on the New Haven Green to raise awareness for drug overdoses and commemorate people lost in the opioid crisis.

people on proper needle usage and passing out flyers and snacks. They also handed out naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal drug.

“One of my passions is really combating against stigma,” Eggert told the News.

“For me, what’s always exciting is if a patient that’s moved on from our facility comes and says hi,” she added.

As Connecticut and the rest of the United States continue to battle the opioid crisis, many, like Firine, still

grieve those who were lost, but are determined to change the future of the drug epidemic.

“If we had used the COVID model and we had put out public messaging, we would have saved a lot of lives, because people don’t realize it’s a disease,” Firine said.

Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center is located at 400 Columbus Ave.

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