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## UPDATED: Crash sends five juveniles to hospital

By Patrick Tepoorten

A routine drive to school turned tragic for five North Branch teenagers Monday morning when their vehicle collided with another on Hemingway Ave. All five were transported to the Twin Cities for medical treatment, including two who were transported by helicopter.

According to the preliminary accident report from the North Branch Police Department, Jessica Jean Olen, 16, was driving southbound on Hemingway Ave., in a Dodge Caravan at approximately 8 a.m. Aboard were four passengers; cousins Riley Nichole Kessel, 16, and James David Kessel, 14; Nicholas Scott Lundquist, 16; and Olen's brother Anthony Jon Olen, 14.

A pickup truck being driven by Gregory Allen Becker, 25, of North Branch, attempted to turn into the northbound lane of Hemingway Ave. from eastbound 378th Street when the truck was struck by the van carrying the five teenagers. Both Becker and his passenger, Julie Ann Fairbanks, 29, of North Branch, were evaluated at the scene and did not require further immediate medical care.

The five passengers in the van were injured in the crash and were transported to various Twin Cities medical centers for treatment. Two passengers, Lundquist and Jessica Olen, were transported by helicopter.

The accident is being reconstructed by the State Patrol and remains under investigation by the North Branch Police Department, but the preliminary report indicates that Becker's actions, turning northbound from 378th Ave., was "factor contributing to the accident."

At press time, Jessica Olen was listed in fair condition at Gillette Children's Hospital; brother Anthony is in satisfactory condition at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC); James Kessel is listed in serious condition at HCMC; Riley Kessel is listed in good condition at Regions Hospital; and Lundquist is reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit at Children's Hospital in Minneapolis. His family has declined to release any information as to his condition.

The North Branch Police Department was first on the scene of the crash, and Lakes Region EMS executive director Aarron Reinert credited officers Dan Meyer and John Pego with possibly saving lives. "They realized right away that there were severe injuries and got the right resources to the scene," said Reinert. "That made the biggest difference."

Reinert also noted that the injured van passengers were sent to different hospitals for treatment's sake. With all five in serious condition at the time of the accident, all needed immediate medical attention. Transporting all passengers to the same location may not have allowed for that due to staffing or space concerns.

According to Barbara Boelk, who is acting as spokesperson for the families, the Olen's and the Kessel's are all expected to make a full recovery. Also, visitors are welcome for all four patients. Lundquist's immediate family did not comment.

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**Emergency workers worked to extricate Jessica Olen, the driver of a mini-van involved in a serious accident with a pickup truck Monday morning. Olen was later transported by helicopter to a Twin Cities medical facility.**