

Activist Killed In Collision On CR 630



Steve Pickett and his wife, Cathy, co-founded Friends Together, an AIDS-awareness group. Steve Pickett, 50, died Monday in an auto accident. Photo courtesy of MICHAEL WILSON/THE LEDGER

FORT MEADE -- Steve Pickett, a community activist who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for AIDS awareness, died Monday in a car accident west of Fort Meade.

Pickett, 50, helped found Friends Together with his wife, Cathy Robinson Pickett, and friend Shawn McGuinn in 1999.

The group sponsors camps for people who are HIV-positive and their families four or five times a year. It also promotes AIDS awareness and prevention.

Every year, the group holds a Christmas party and gives presents to children with AIDS.

As an organ donor, Pickett will continue giving, even in death, said his friend, Will Gregory.

Gregory, who is on the board of directors for Friends Together, said the group will carry on.

"Because of Steve, we'll keep going, because he would have wanted it that way."

Pickett had just started working full-time for The Mosaic Co. It was his second day on the job, and Gregory said Pickett likely was headed home when the crash happened, about 12:30 p.m.

Pickett was driving a 1990 Nissan pickup east on County Road 630 at the time of the crash.

Pickett's truck apparently drifted off the road, onto the shoulder, and then he over-corrected into the path of a westbound tractor-trailer driven by Wendell Shank, 52, of Lake Wales.

One of the rear tractor-trailer's tires came apart after the crash and hit another eastbound truck. Neither Shank nor the other driver were hurt.

Paramedics airlifted Pickett to Lakeland Regional Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

He is survived by his wife, Cathy, and two stepchildren, Lyndsy and Garrett Robinson.

"He loved those children as much as if they had been his own children," Gregory said.

Story By Dana Willhoit
The Ledger

OBITUARY -- Mr. Steven Charles Pickett of Lakeland died of injuries sustained in an auto accident Monday (April 25, 2005) at Lakeland Regional Medical Center. He was 50.

Born in Callahan on March 31, 1955, he came to Lakeland from there 10 years ago. He was director of Friends Together, an HIV and AIDS advocacy organization. He was formerly a Boy Scout leader and a Big Brother. He was a member of the Lions Club in Callahan. He was head buyer at Mosaic Wingate Mine in Duette. He was a member of Trinity Congregational Church in Winter Haven.

Mr. Pickett is survived by his wife, Cathy Robinson Pickett; daughter, Lyndsy Robinson, Lakeland; son, Garrett Robinson, Lakeland; mother, Lorraine Pickett, Callahan; sisters, Donna Yancey, Callahan, Patty Jones, Yulle, Peggy Ann Wilson, Fernandina Beach; brothers, Charles Pickett, John Borst, both of Callahan.

Visitation will be from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at Heath Funeral Chapel. Services will be at 3 p.m. Saturday at Trinity Congregational Church.

Memorials may be made to Trinity Congregational Church, 1011 State Road 540 S.W., Winter Haven, FL 33880.