

RRPD officer dies in single-car wreck

By GARY HERRON

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The investigation continues into what caused the early Sunday morning accident on Idalia Road that killed rookie Rio Rancho Police officer Anthony Haase as he was en route to a domestic violence call in Northern Meadows.

Haase was dispatched at 2:50 a.m. and was westbound at the time of the accident, when his patrol car left the road on the south side of Idalia, about a half-mile east of its intersection with Iris Road.

A large search party was convened in the area of the crash on Monday, with Haase's cell phone the item sought to help in the investigation of why he crashed. No further details were available at press time Tuesday as to why Haase's unit left the roadway.

Haase, 24, had been sworn in to RRPD just five months earlier; he was, perhaps, better known as a former standout pitcher for the Rio Rancho High School baseball team, which he helped lead to the Class 5A championship in 2007. Haase was the winning pitcher for the Rams in their 8-0 semifinal victory over Oñate and with four innings of one-hit relief in the 4-1 championship-game win over Mayfield a day later.

RRHS baseball coach Ron Murphy said he couldn't hold back the tears when he learned of Haase's death mid-morning on Sunday.

Haase, a 2008 graduate of RRHS, "was a big 'ol boy who could throw the ball hard and overpower people," Murphy said. "He treated every pitch like it was the final pitch of the World Series."

In 2007, the first of three Rams' diamond championships, Murphy recalled, the junior right-hander "carried the team on his shoulders — he was a great competitor."

And, he added, he never had to worry about Haase getting into trouble anytime: "He did his job and he'd go home and play video games. I never worried about him."



Anthony Haase

Murphy organized an alumni gathering set for Wednesday evening at the Rams' baseball stadium for former players to share stories about Haase and honor his life.

After graduation from RRHS in May 2008, Haase was drafted by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays in June's draft, but opted to play at Cochise Community College in Douglas, Ariz. Two years later, the Texas Rangers drafted him in the 17th round. He signed with them and went 4-0 for their Rookie League team that summer and then was 0-1 for that team in 2011 but wasn't signed to another contract.

Born in Gilroy, Calif., the garlic capital of the world, Haase and his family arrived in Rio Rancho when he was about 5, and he attended, in order, Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, Lincoln Middle School and Rio Rancho Mid-High before arriving on the RRHS campus as a 10th-grader. Pre-Ram, he'd been a Sunset Little League all-star for five seasons in a row (2000-04). His younger brother Nick later played for the Cleveland High baseball team.

Haase is survived by his wife, Nichole.

"The death of Officer Haase while in the line of duty is deeply saddening," said Mayor Gregg Hull. "The City of Rio Rancho mourns the loss of this dedicated law enforcement public servant, and extends its heartfelt condolences to Officer Haase's loved ones. I urge community members to keep Officer Haase's family in their thoughts and prayers and to reflect on the dedication of the brave men and women who risk their lives daily to keep Rio Rancho safe."

Haase is the first officer killed on duty since Germaine Casey died in October 2007 while serving as a motorcycle escort for President George W. Bush.