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Two drown in McDonald County in recent weeks

July 4, 2019 by Megan Davis McDonald County Press

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A low-head dam, the subsequent recirculating current it creates, and an act of blind bravery led to a Kansas man drowning in the Elk River last month.

According to a report from the Missouri State Highway Patrol, at 6:41 p.m. on Friday, June 21, an unidentified female swimmer was swept underwater at a low-head dam on the Elk River in Noel.

Upon seeing the swimmer struggle, 26-year-old Jacob Farley, of Wichita, Kan., entered the water downstream to attempt a rescue. The two quickly became caught in the waters current but were able to rely on each other until the Noel Fire Department arrived on-scene.

Emergency responders were able to rescue the female swimmer with a throw rope but Farley drowned.

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Water hydraulics, often called drowning machines, occur primarily in low-head dams.

During periods of high runoff, water rushing over the dam creates a powerful recirculating current, called a water hydraulic, near the bottom of the stream. The churning water pulls any object -- including a person -- down to the riverbed before pushing it to the surface, then pulling it down again, relentlessly and indefinitely trapping the object.

This force, in combination with the cold temperatures of runoff water, decreased buoyancy from air bubbles mixing below the surface, and hazards posed by other debris caught in the hydraulic, can make for a difficult recovery.



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Farley's was the first fatality in McDonald County waterways this year but was soon followed by another death during a flash flood over the weekend.

According to a report from the Missouri State Highway Patrol, 64-year-old Linda Kuykendall was swept away from her residence at 341 Wallain Court in Anderson at 9:55 a.m. on Sunday, June 23, as the water levels on Indian Creek rose rapidly.

Search and rescue crews searched for her throughout the week as recovery efforts grew.

Six days later, on Saturday, June 29, Kuykendall was located approximately 3 miles downstream and pronounced dead on the scene.

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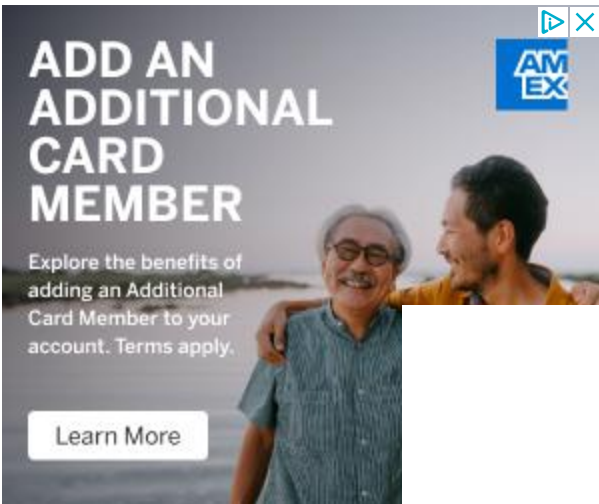


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