

Lakeland police shoot teen in stolen car By Gary - Florida Times-Union, The (Jacksonville, FL) - December 27, 2018 - page 2,B-2

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An early morning shooting Wednesday involving Lakeland Police Department officers has left a Winter Haven teenager dead.

The incident took place about 2 a.m. during a gathering of about 200 people in the parking lot of Salem's Fresh Eats restaurant. Police spokesman Gary Gross said the agency received a call from an employee at Salem's requesting officers to clear the parking lot at 101 E. Memorial Blvd. at North Florida Avenue.

Responding to the gathering, officers spotted a stolen Camaro out of Winter Haven in the parking lot. Lakeland Police Chief Larry Giddens said as multiple officers approached the vehicle issuing verbal commands, the driver accelerated from a parked position, "aggressively" speeding through the parking lot toward an officer and a group of patrons who were scattering from the approaching Camaro.

Giddens called the scene "chaotic" and said the officer feared for his life as well as the safety of a large group of scattering patrons.

Officers opened fire on the vehicle, which struck multiple vehicles and a utility pole, Giddens said. The Camaro eventually rammed into a parked car, launching it into the neighboring Bike Barn business, causing a hole in the exterior block wall.

Prior to those multiple collisions, a female passenger was able to roll out of the vehicle, Giddens said. The woman told officers that a firearm may have been in the Camaro, and the weapon was later found on the driver's side floorboard, Giddens said.

Following the collision with the Bike Barn business, officers got **Michael Jerome Taylor**, 17, of Winter Haven out of the Camaro and began to perform first aid. He was pronounced dead at Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center.

Taylor had four previous felony arrests, ranging from burglary to grand theft auto, police said.

The officers involved in the incident are Markais Neal, 28; Joseph Novis, 25; and Raj Patel, 23. Neal has one year of service, while Novis and Patel each have been with the department for 18 months.

Police had not yet determined how many times the suspect was shot or how many rounds the officers fired.

Salem's was the site of an incident early Thanksgiving morning in which a melee broke out and several people were arrested. The eatery is a regular gathering spot for people who congregate

after nightclubs close at 2 a.m., Gross said following that incident.

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