

Teen 'critical' after fall off cliff

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Cooperstown News Bureau

COOPERSTOWN — A 17-year-old Cooperstown Central School senior was in critical condition Sunday night in Bassett Hospital's intensive care unit after she fell off a 75-foot cliff Friday during a late-night teen party near Cherry Valley.

State police said Constance Laymon of Oak River Trailer Park, Index, on Route 28 a few miles south of here, suffered serious spinal injuries in the fall.

"She apparently fell about 40 feet straight down," a trooper said. "Then she rolled about 30 more feet." Witnesses said she landed on a pile of shale rock.

The accident happened between 11:30 p.m. and midnight on Friday, police said, in a wooded area near O'Neil Road, about three miles from county Route 50 in the town of Cherry Valley.

"At least 30 young people were having a party," police said. "They had a campfire. Most of them left quite soon after the accident. There was alcohol present." Police said they did not know how long the party had been in progress.

Two of those present, Randy Stocking and Marty Tracy, both 17, and both students at Springfield Central School, went down the cliff in an effort to help the girl, police said.

Stocking, who climbed down the cliff at the point where the girl fell, suffered cuts on his face and hands. Rescue workers said he slipped and fell when he reached the shale-covered area near where the girl landed. He was treated at Bassett Hospital and was released Saturday morning. Witnesses said Stocking made the descent by grabbing tree roots most of the way. He could not be reached Sunday for comment.

The Tracy youth said that he went down into the ravine at a point further along the cliff's edge.

"I sort of went down on the seat of my pants most of the way, then fell the rest," he said. "We covered her with our shirts and a friend's jacket and tried to keep her warm until the emergency squad got there.

"She could talk, but not very much. We didn't let her move. We just kept her quiet and warm until help came."

Miss Laymon was rescued by members of the Cherry Valley Emergency Squad and Fire Department who used a special basket to carry her out of the ravine.

"She picked the worst spot anybody could fall on there," said Dorsun Davis, emergency squad captain.

Davis said it took about 45 minutes for the rescue team to travel through the ravine and up an embankment to reach the girl.

Tracy said that "there were about 20 kids there, but there wasn't much drinking, at least not by us. Some others were, but she hadn't been. We only got there a little while before it happened."

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