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## A drunk driver is forgiven

This cell phone picture was taken at the Wabegon Supper Club in Duluth's Gary neighborhood less than 20 minutes before these four friends were in an accident that took the life of Tim Stephenson (bottom). In the back, from left, are James Nelson, Samuel Rodman and Jeremy Shea. Photo by Stephanie Laubach



The parents of Tim Stephenson, who died after a night of drinking with friends, say all the young men were responsible for the accident

**JOE CADOTTE**  
For the News Tribune

**T**im Stephenson, Samuel Rodman, James Nelson and Jeremy Shea had been hanging out together since they were kids at Wrenshall School.

On the night of June 2, they went to the Wabegon Supper Club in Duluth's Gary neighborhood to play pool and drink beer, celebrating Shea's return to Duluth after six years in Florida.

They left the Wabegon about 1 a.m., stopping briefly to let bartender and friend Stephanie Laubach snap a photo of them with her cell phone. Then they piled into Shea's 2008 Honda Accord, with Shea driving and Stephenson next to him in front. Nelson was the only one to put on his seat belt.

Just a half-mile from the Wabegon on Highway 23 in Fond du Lac and only blocks from their destination, Shea missed a turn



Jeff and Selma Stephenson

going more than 90 mph and rolled the car three times into the trees and back to the road.

Stephenson, 25, died shortly after the crash from a head injury. Rodman, 23, sustained traumatic brain injuries. Nelson, 27, and Shea, 22, both suffered broken bones, cuts and bruises. Police say initial tests put Shea's blood-alcohol level at .10, slightly over the .08 limit to drive.

Jeff and Selma Stephenson, Tim's parents, know that Shea had been drinking and speeding before the crash.

They know that he's facing 10 counts of criminal vehicular homicide, criminal vehicular operation and reckless driving in the crash that killed their son.

But they say they forgive him.

"I told him that I loved him and forgave him for what he did," said Jeff Stephenson, Tim's father. "(Shea) still has responsibilities to face."

Tim Stephenson's parents helped organize a Saturday fundraiser in Gary billed as "Benefit 4 the Boys," which drew more than 500 friends and family members of the four men in the crash, as well as Shea and Nelson. Rodman is undergoing treatment at Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colo. Proceeds from the fundraiser were to help defray medical costs for the victims' families.

Organizers aimed to do more than raise money, though. They wanted to spread the word about the dangers of drinking and driving, and to emphasize the importance of wearing seat belts. About 100 organizations, including dozens of gas stations and restaurants, donated prizes. Representatives from Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Minnesota Teen Challenge were there.

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## Huskies cut pitch after the

**MARK STODGHILL**  
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One of the Duluth Huskies' promising pitchers cost himself on the team by pocketing a \$15 glove lacing kit from a Mankatoing goods store last weekend.

Jason Whalen, 21, a 6-foot-3, pound right handed pitcher from Raton, Fla., pleaded guilty Thursday to misdemeanor theft. The Huskies were in Mankato on Saturday to play their Northwoods League Mankato MoonDogs when the crime occurred. The team reported early last week that Whalen was released for violating team rules.

According to a Mankato report: A loss prevention employee at Scheels Sporting Goods store in Mankato saw Whalen put the V glove lacing kit in the waistband of his shorts. He said Whalen continued to shop for about 30 minutes going to different departments. He then left the store.

The employee stopped Whalen. Mankato police officer respondent player said that he forgot the kit and did not try to take it. He told the officer he would be the Duluth Huskies if he were released. He said he would be on an air trip to Florida by Monday.

Huskies team officials weren't sure that Whalen knew the consequences of his actions.

Michael Rosenzweig, team co-owner, said players on the team were spoken to as they arrived in Duluth last summer and told they would be removed from the team if they didn't follow all rules and regulations.

"He was a great player. I'm sure it had to happen," Rosenzweig said in this case, a rule is a rule. We want them to understand that we don't make the rules just for the sake of making rules. They have to adhere to them. We all have rules. I know you get through this and he's learned a valuable lesson in life."

Whalen is a junior at Lynn University in Boca Raton, where he is a member of the sports and recreation manager. He has been a standout for the Duluth team the past two seasons. He was the team's closing relief pitcher. He has a 2.0 record with eight saves and a 1.96 earned run average. He received



WHALEN

## Skyline land sale followed rules

Neighbors say they will ask City Council

**Auctioned parcel**

## House Republicans delay debt vote

DAVID ESPO

icans led by Speaker