

# Acadia student's friends mourn her death in Mexico

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Sydney Taylor at an Atlanta Braves game at Turner Field in Atlanta, Ga. She was a big fan of the team. (Submitted)

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WOLFVILLE — Sydney Taylor was a loyal friend who loved to sing and play guitar, says one of her closest friends at Acadia University.

“She was an extremely loyal friend,” said Matt Leroux, who became close friends with the 21-year-old political science graduate over the past year.

They lived in the same apartment building in Wolfville and spent much time talking and confiding in each other.

“She always came to you whenever you needed someone. We both went through a lot of personal, emotional stuff this year. We told each other everything,” Leroux said in an interview Wednesday from his home in Ajax, Ont.

“She was also an extremely talented musician. She was an exceptional guitar player and had one of the most beautiful voices I ever heard,” said Leroux, his voice cracking as he spoke.

“My thing is going to concerts and I’ve seen over 50 live musical acts. She is right up there with them,” he said of his friend.

Taylor was part of a group of 126 recent Acadia graduates who headed to Cancun, Mexico on May 1 for a week’s vacation. The trip was privately arranged and not part of any campus activity.

The young woman died early Tuesday morning after reportedly falling 10 metres from a second or third floor balcony of her hotel at the Gran Caribe Real Resort and Spa in Cancun.

The other students were expected to fly back to Halifax sometime Wednesday.

“Syd became one of my closest friends,” said Leroux. They had been texting each other right up until she boarded the plane for Mexico a week ago.

“She was literally friends with everyone. Everybody knew her. She was the life of the party, always upbeat and had a smile on,” he said.

Taylor was also a huge Atlanta Braves fan. Leroux shared a photo of her attending a game at Turner Field in Atlanta, a large smile on her face with the ballfield in the background.

Taylor is originally from Atlanta, Georgia, but moved to Halifax when she was a teenager, he said. She attended Halifax Grammar School, graduating from there in 2009.

She worked for a time at Stayner's Wharf Pub and Grill in Halifax. Her Facebook page shows her currently working as an intern at the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Atlanta.

Leroux said her mother lives in Florida and her father resides in Halifax, but she has other family in Atlanta.

He said there are varying reports about her death. But he heard that Taylor was climbing from one balcony to another in the hotel early Tuesday morning when she fell, landing on her head.

Leroux said Taylor asked him several times to go on the Mexico trip, but he was not part of this year's graduating class. He plans to return to Acadia next year to finish his business degree.

"I'm still in shock. I don't know if it's more that I don't believe it happened or I don't want to believe it happened. I woke up this morning hoping it was a horrible nightmare that I would be able to wake up from...but it's beginning to sink in now."

Leroux said he received word of Taylor's death around 11:30 am Tuesday while at his summer job in Ajax. "I completely broke down, I told my supervisor I had to leave. I just completely lost it because it came right out of left field."

Leroux said he plans to be in Halifax for Taylor's funeral, once he finds out the details.

Matthew Rios, president of the Acadia Students' Union, knew Taylor well and said she will be sadly missed by everyone on campus. He is also studying political science and said the department is a very close-knit community.

While Taylor had successfully completed her degree, she would have graduated with honours in political science at Acadia's convocation exercises this Sunday.

"We are all devastated," said Rios. "Anyone who knew Sydney knew that she had an infectious smile and an infectious laugh. She had a great love of music, but also of the campus, the friends she made here and certainly of her family."

He added, that people are "tremendously sad at this tragic loss. She just was one of those people who lit up a room wherever she went."

Convocation exercises will go ahead as planned Sunday.

"We're expecting that on a weekend that is naturally very emotional...this will be magnified," said Rios. "But at the same token...we have been in discussion with the family, and they are very adamant that this is a celebration."

He added, "that all of us will honour her memory in our own ways."

Acadia spokesman Scott Roberts said counselling services are being made available to students and everyone on campus.

Canadian consular officials are working with Mexican authorities to gather more information and are providing assistance to Taylor's family.

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*With Davene Jeffrey and Dan Arsenault, staff reporters*

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