

Kaya Firth, Zach Sutherland lost their lives doing what they loved

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Police were notified after two yellow kayaks were seen lodged in the ice Sunday afternoon.

The couple were both in their final years at University of Guelph. Sutherland was a fourth-year commerce major, Firth an English major.

We are deeply saddened by this news, said president Franco Vaccarino. Our hearts and thoughts go out to the friends and families of these two vibrant young people.

During her time at Guelph, Firth worked as a sports and health editor for school's student newspaper, *The Ontarion*.

Kaya began working as the sports and health editor for *The Ontarion* in September 2015 where she made a strong, positive impact in our office and brought smiles to the faces of all who had the pleasure of working with her, said Emilio Ghouloum, Editor in Chief.

Kaya's adventurous spirit, her willingness to learn, and her profound kindness characterized her time in our office, and it will not be

forgotten. Our staff, our volunteers, and the members of the University of Guelph community will remember her fondly.

Our deepest condolences go out to the Firth and Sutherland families, and all those affected by this devastating news. *The Ontarion* will continue to respectfully honour her memory and remember the vibrant, glowing spirit she brought into our lives.

The Town of Halton Hills lowered its flags Tuesday to mourn the tragic news. Firth worked with the Town's Recreation & Parks department in several community programs, and played an integral part of the summer camp team since her start in 2010, a press release stated Tuesday (Feb. 23). Most recently she was an assistant co-ordinator, working part-time/on-call helping with admin duties, youth dances and other special events.

Kaya will be remembered by her co-workers for her kindness, energy and dedication. She made an impact not only on the participants she



Photos posted on social media paint a picture of Kaya Firth and Zach Sutherland, both 21, as a active couple often seen enjoying the outdoors together.

Facebook photo

worked with, but our staff team as well, said Mayor Rick Bonnette. On behalf of Town Council, I extend my

heartfelt sympathies to Kaya's family.

During the search for Suther-

land, a number of local residents and friends stood behind the police barricades as Caledon OPP and Central Region diving teams worked diligently to break through the ice Monday.

Using ropes, pulleys, a chainsaw and at least two crew members in the water as well as two more on shore, they slowly managed to free the two kayaks early Monday afternoon as they continued their search.

It's not common to see kayakers around this time of year but it was just such a beautiful day yesterday, said longtime Terra Cotta resident, Jamie Bobeckho. I've just never seen anything like this happen in the 19 years we've been here.

He added that given the warm temperatures over the last few months, the river, which is normally totally frozen over on the surface, had opened up significantly in terms of ice cover.

While the waters appeared to be flowing rather freely everywhere else, this particular section still had significant ice cover despite the warm temperatures in recent days.

The families remember their children

Editor's Note: The Firth and Sutherland families composed these articles so the community could learn about the legacy that Kaya and Zach left behind in their young lives.

Kaya Firth

Kaya was the firstborn child of Duncan and Jennifer and being raised by very young parents made the family grow together.

Unconcerned with traditional norms, Kaya was raised to question and to make her own decisions. She adored her brothers Jackson and Isaac and considered Christopher her third brother. They always played together as children, often with Kaya making the calls. As they grew up they became close friends and relied on each other for insight and support.

Kaya was inspired by nature, loved the family cottage and took every opportunity to be out on the lake. She grew up on and around the water and found peace paddling the kayak or canoe. She could hold her own behind the speedboat too, either slalom skiing or wakeboarding with the boys.

Kaya loved working with children and was a counsellor for Town of Halton Hills Recreation programs, going on to work in an Administrative role there. She was held in

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Zach Sutherland

Zachary Sutherland was a gentle, caring son, brother, grandson, nephew and friend. He strived for balance in work and pleasure, knowing that life is about being loved and giving love back to anyone who came across him whether it be from sporting activities, school or teaching children how to swim during the last five summers.

Zach had the knack from when he was young to be able to charm both adults and children. He genuinely loved talking and listening to everyone and knew how to make

them feel special. He has kept friends from elementary school and kept on adding to his social circle as he progressed to high school and university at Guelph. Many of his friends he considered like brothers.

He had to grow up quickly due to family circumstances. He never begrudged this but kept the family moving forward with a happy demeanor and with purpose.

He loved being active whether it was from organized sports, shooting hoops on the

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