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Slain teen excelled in hockey, studies

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Trophies and photos adorn Boris Cikovic's bedroom in his family's apartment near Eglinton Ave. and Scarlett Rd.

ANDREW WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

A decade and a half after her family fled the violence of war-torn Sarajevo, Vesna Cikovic says she can't believe her 17-year-old son was gunned down in a peaceful west-end Toronto neighbourhood Friday night.

Her face pale and shoulders slumped, she said her only child, Boris, was on his way to a pizza restaurant with a group of friends. They were jumped in a park by four youths who apparently wanted to steal their cellphones and anything else of value, according to Cikovic, after speaking with police throughout the day.

The attackers also tried to steal her son's cheap cloth backpack, but he resisted and wound up dead, she said.

Police have not confirmed the events that led to the slaying.

"We came here to give him a safer environment," said Cikovic.

"It's bizarre that he was killed in Toronto, in a nice area, because of a bag that cost me \$2."

She stared at the floor of her son's neatly kept room in the family's apartment near Eglinton Ave. W. and Scarlett Rd. The bed was made and several hockey trophies and team pictures were displayed on a shelf.

Friends said her son was a Grade 12 student at Scarlett Heights Entrepreneurial Academy. "He was a very good student, an athletic type. He was a very good kid," Cikovic said.

Police said they responded to a report of gunshots at Buttonwood Park at about 10:40 p.m. Friday. The park, near Eglinton Ave. W. and Royal York Rd., has a tennis court and two children's playgrounds and is surrounded by well-maintained homes and several apartment buildings.

Officers found Cikovic suffering from "obvious signs of trauma" and took him to hospital where he was pronounced dead, according to a police statement. Police did not reveal any further details about their investigation, including possible suspects, and are asking anyone who was in the area at the time of the murder to come forward.

Yesterday afternoon the only thing left to indicate a murder took place at the scene was a pile of yellow police tape stuffed into a nearby trashcan.

Residents who live near the park described the area as tranquil. One man, who said he has lived in the area for 40 years, had never heard of any violence in the neighbourhood.

About 30 distraught friends and classmates gathered yesterday afternoon at a nearby junior school that Cikovic had attended.

They described Cikovic as outgoing and a comedian.

"He was a nice kid with a sense of humour," said a former teacher, who declined to give her name.

His mother said he was fond of sports and had been named an all-star on his hockey team a few years ago. He also worked part-time at a movie theatre, she said.

A close family friend said Cikovic's death had left his mother and father shell-shocked. The parents were gathered with friends in their small apartment yesterday afternoon.

"They lost their only child," said Caba Juhas. "That kid who shot him – with one bullet he killed three persons."

Cikovic was Toronto's 53rd homicide victim this year.