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Friends say 19-year-old was troubled

He's accused in death of girl, 1

By [Ben Leubsdorf](#) / [Monitor staff](#)

Two years ago, Alexander Stolte was Merrimack Valley High School's star goaltender, racking up honors and nearly helping the Pride to back-to-back state lacrosse championships.

Now Stolte is held without bail in a Vermont prison, charged with second-degree murder in the death of 1-year-old Kyleigh McDaniel of Andover. If convicted, the 19-year-old Penacook native could spend the rest of his life behind bars.

Friends and others who knew Stolte say he had a difficult childhood and spent years bouncing around foster care and friends' houses, at times living on the street. He didn't graduate from Merrimack Valley, dropping out in September 2008. Stolte is accused of causing Kyleigh's fatal injuries. He pleaded not guilty Friday to the murder charge.

"In my wildest dreams, I would never think Alex is capable of doing something like this," said Kameron Miranda, whose son said he was Stolte's best friend in high school. "Even if he was drunk, on drugs, he would never hurt a child. He has a little bit of a mean streak, but he is a good kid."

Stolte was baby-sitting Kyleigh, his girlfriend's daughter, Wednesday night at his mother's home in Chelsea, Vt., when he called 911 to report the girl wasn't breathing. She was pronounced dead at a nearby hospital.

Kyleigh had suffered multiple rear skull fractures and a broken leg, as well as bleeding inside her skull known as a subdural hematoma, the Vermont State Police said. She also had three previously broken ribs that were healing, the police said.

Stolte denied hurting the child, but he was the only person at the house when the injuries would have been inflicted, the police said.

Kyleigh's family, including parents Nicholas Robinson and MacKenzie McDaniel, has declined to be interviewed after speaking briefly to the news media following Friday's arraignment.

Stolte is held at the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield, Vt., and couldn't be reached. His lawyer, Dan Sedon, didn't return a message left at his office yesterday.

Members of Stolte's family couldn't be reached yesterday. A man who picked up the phone at Stolte's mother's home in Chelsea demanded privacy.

"You let us grieve," said the man, who didn't give his name.

High school to homeless

Stolte had a difficult childhood, said Miranda, who said she let him stay at her house regularly and even tried to become his foster parent and adopt him. She said she considers Stolte her son and he calls her "mom." He was in the foster care system during high school and also spent time living at friends' houses, she and others who knew him said.

On the lacrosse field, he was a "good teammate," tried to be a leader and "might be the best pure athlete I've worked with," said Sean O'Brien, Merrimack Valley's coach.

Stolte was the goaltender on the Pride's state championship team in 2007, his sophomore year. He was named the Division III lacrosse defensive player of the season in 2008, after helping take Merrimack Valley to the semifinals of the D-III tournament.

In a 2008 interview with the Monitor, Stolte said he wanted to attend Castleton State College in Vermont and become a licensed physical therapist.

But he dropped out of high school after he turned 18, during his senior year when he didn't have anywhere to live, Miranda said. She said her family moved from Webster to Concord in 2006 and then to southern California in 2007. They plan to move back to Concord later this month.

"Going to school is the last thing on your list when you're wondering where you're going to live and what you're going to eat," Miranda said.

Over time, Stolte alienated many of his friends, said Katelin Haley, who dated him for a year and a half. Haley, 18, now attends Castleton and is studying to become a physical therapist - the dream Stolte told the Monitor two years ago he wanted to share with her.

"So many people have tried to help him get on his feet, so many people have tried to do so much for that kid, and he completely deceived all of them," Haley said.

Stolte got into trouble, including fighting, and spent time in jail, Miranda said. He sometimes lived outdoors near Everett Arena in Concord, and Miranda said Stolte told her during his regular collect calls he was using drugs, though he didn't say which ones.

"I said, 'Alex, I'm really disappointed because you're better than that,' and he would say, 'Mom, it's the only way I can get through the day,' " she recalled yesterday.

Several men eating dinner last night at the Friendly Kitchen, a Concord soup kitchen, said they knew Stolte, and one man who didn't give his name called him a "rat."

But Alex Diodati, 48, said he worked with Stolte on odd jobs and knew his family growing up. He described Stolte, who was known as "Smiley," as responsible and respectful for his age.

"He wasn't angry; he wasn't rude. His nickname, that kind of says it all right there," Diodati said.

"Anytime I've seen Alex, when he's not drinking, he's one of the most even-tempered guys I've met," Diodati added.

'My daughter'

"I want to get out of here. I want my own spot. I want my own accomplishments," Stolte, then 18 and homeless, told the Monitor last year.

A few months ago, Miranda said, Stolte went to live with his mother in Chelsea, Vt. He also started dating MacKenzie McDaniell, a 20-year-old from Andover with a 1-year-old daughter, Kyleigh.

On March 2, he wrote in a Facebook wall post, "kyleigh and i are bonding she really is my world." On Jan. 24, he wrote, "lovein my babygirls kylie and mackenzie love u 2 more than u could ever wrap ur heads around it." Miranda said she spoke to Stolte by phone on Wednesday, the day authorities said Kyleigh suffered her fatal injuries, while he was baby-sitting the girl.

"He said he loved it and he loved her and she was great, and he was going to make amends with this child for what he went through in his childhood," Miranda said.

Earlier that day, Stolte posted on Facebook that he didn't plan to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. "i partyed real hard last yr so this yr ima watch my daughter," he wrote.

When Miranda spoke to him about 7:45 p.m., Stolte said he drank a few beers, but he didn't seem drunk, she said.

"When I talked to him, he was sober. . . . I know what he sounds like when he's hammered," she said.

Stolte initially told investigators he didn't drink that night, but then said he had consumed vodka after his blood-alcohol level was measured at 0.071 percent on a breath test at the hospital where Kyleigh was pronounced dead, the police said in an affidavit.

No explanation of how Kyleigh may have sustained her injuries was offered at Stolte's arraignment Friday or in the police affidavit. Her death was ruled a homicide, caused by "blunt impacts to the head," the police said. "I just don't see him doing this," Miranda said yesterday, her voice choking with emotion.

"He's not that kind of a person. He would never hurt a child."

She said Stolte worked hard in school and had ambitions but lacked stability in his personal life.

"If Alex would have had the right home life, he would have gone really far," Miranda said. "He was one of those kids who was riding that fine line where he could go bad or he could do great things with his life." **(Ben Leubsdorf can be reached at 369-3307 or bleubsdorf@cmonitor.com)**