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Identities of Family in Tragic Helicopter Crash in St. Thomas Revealed; Total of Four People Were on Board

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**From left, Neisher Zahn, Tyler and Daniel Yannone at the St. Thomas Reformed Church.
By. THE ST. THOMAS REFORMED CHURCH**

The St. Thomas Reformed Church has revealed the identities of the family of three who died during a helicopter crash at Botany Bay in St. Thomas Monday afternoon.

The church, which also said the family were members of its congregation, revealed the family to be Daniel Yannone and Neisha Zahn, and their son Tyler Yannone, who was a senior at Antilles School in St. Thomas. The church revealed the identities in a [post on Facebook](#).

The other person on the helicopter, the pilot, has been revealed as Maria Rodriquez. Country singer Kenny Chesney published a heartfelt tribute to the deceased Rodriquez [on his Facebook](#)

[page](#).

"Tyler belonged to our church, to our XYG youth group; he and his parents Daniel & Neisha belonged and served this church and community in countless, unselfish ways; friends to so many," wrote the St. Thomas Reformed Church pastor, who was only identified as Jeff. "On this eve of Ash Wednesday, where we remember our mortality, I ask you all to join our faith community in prayer for Daniel, Neisha, Tyler and Maria (beloved pilot who many called "friend.")"

The family, originally from Youngstown, Ohio, was the proprietor of Beep Business, a St. Thomas customs brokerage.

Rodriguez was an experienced pilot who owned Caribbean Buzz Helicopters. In 2018 Rodriguez earned the Pilot of the Year award from Helicopter Association International for her work in hurricane relief efforts following Irma and Maria the previous year. After Irma, Rodriguez flew countless support and relief missions, doing the same after Maria - according to HAI, once for 28 days straight. Rodriguez was well-known on St. Thomas, and because of her work came into contact with several high-profile individuals. She once flew the Obamas, and country singer Kenny Chesney counts her as a close friend.

The Consortium [reported Monday](#) night that four people had succumbed to injuries in the crash, which was confirmed today by Gov't House Communications Director, Richard Motta, during the administration's Covid-19 response update. The call came in to the 911 Emergency Call Center just after 3:00 p.m.

According to two people with knowledge of the search and rescue effort, emergency personnel resumed their work to recover the bodies early Tuesday after visibility diminished Monday night. Today, Mr. Motta confirmed that the bodies were recovered, though he wasn't clear on when.

The response included a number of local and federal agencies. On the local side were the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), the V.I. Fire Service, the V.I. Port Authority and the V.I. Police Department. On the federal side, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and National Transportation Safety Board were present. St. Thomas Rescue was on site as well.

It has not yet been shared what caused the helicopter to go down.

Local officials late Monday and early Tuesday shared condolences. Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, who is serving as acting governor while Governor Albert Bryan is away on a personal matter, said, "As the entire community tries to process this painful loss, I pray for comfort and strength for the families, friends, and loved ones of the passengers. The loss of these lives is so deeply felt, especially during a time when we are taking such measures to protect life during the ongoing pandemic which we face," he said.

He added, "I am extremely grateful for the collective response of emergency response teams who are to be commended and recognized for their efforts."

According to Mr. Roach, Governor Bryan expressed his condolences to the families impacted by Monday's unfortunate incident.

Senate President Donna-Frett-Gregory stated, "We commend the efforts of the first responders, as this tragic event highlights the importance of providing them the resources needed to respond appropriately to emergencies.

“May the departed rest in peace, and may the families and friends be comforted and granted solace. May those who responded to the scene be given the strength needed to process what was faced and may our community lift them all in collective prayer.”

In a statement issued Tuesday morning, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett said, “I was deeply devastated to hear of yesterday’s helicopter crash in Botany Bay that claimed precious lives, including a family of 3. One of the passengers was a senior in my youngest son’s class at Antilles School and had a bright, beautiful future ahead of him.

“I offer my sincere condolences and prayers to the family members, loved ones and friends of each of the individuals that was onboard. This is a horrific tragedy that no one should have to face. I’d like to thank our local public servants, including St. Thomas Rescue, Director Daryl George and the V.I. Fire Service, the V.I. Police Department, and VITEMA for their courageous service to the people of the Virgin Islands.

“On behalf of my staff, my family and myself, our thoughts and fervent prayers for comfort, strength and peace are with the families and loved ones of the victims of this tragic incident.”

Last updated at 5:01 a.m. Wed. Feb. 18, 2021.

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