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# Sheriff: Missing Arizona teen found dead in Oregon

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Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) - The father of an Arizona teenager whose body was found near his abandoned SUV in the woods of southern Oregon said his son was "a young man who had a broken heart."

The body of Johnathan Croom, 18, was found Monday evening about 1,000 feet from where his vehicle was found abandoned last week, Douglas County sheriff's spokesman Dwes Hutson said in a statement.

Hutson said the Apache Junction, Ariz., youth's death was being investigated as a suicide but he provided no additional information. He didn't return a call for comment.

In a telephone interview from Oregon, David Croom said his son was grieving the end of a recent relationship with "someone back in Phoenix."

"He was a young man who had a broken heart and headed out to try to find himself," the elder Croom said. "We're looking forward to finding out exactly what happened."

He thanked everyone who helped search for his son and added, "Please pray for our family."

The father said he had no specifics on a cause of death.

The teen had talked with his parents about the book "Into the Wild" and told a friend he wanted to run away.

Croom's SUV was found Wednesday in Riddle, a town of 1,200 people just off the state's main north-south thoroughfare, Interstate 5.

His mother, Monica Croom, had said he was traveling alone and on his way back from Seattle, where he visited a friend. The teen was due in Arizona on Aug. 17 to start college in Mesa.

Hutson said earlier that text messages between Croom and a friend indicated Croom wanted to run away.

Hutson said Croom also talked to his parents about Christopher McCandless, whose journey to Alaska was documented in the book "Into the Wild." McCandless gave up his worldly goods to live in the Alaska wilderness, only to die there, perhaps from eating wild potatoes.

"I think we have kind of a combination there," Hutson said earlier Monday. "He talked with his parents about 'Into the Wild,' and in text messages we've looked at, he does specifically talk about running away, kind of just running away from his life."

Earlier this year, a 19-year-old from Oklahoma disappeared after talking to his parents about the same book and setting out to test himself against the Oregon wilderness.

Dustin Self's truck was found in April on Steens Mountain in southeast Oregon. The last search for Self was in the spring, after snow melted, but it yielded no hints to his location.

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