

REDLANDS: REV student shot to death over marijuana theft, mom says

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UPDATES WITH ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Jessie Gonzales acknowledges that her 17-year-old son, Marcus Green, should not have stolen marijuana buds from plants he saw growing in Erlindo Rodriguez Jr.'s backyard.

But, Gonzales said, "(Rodriguez) didn't have to shoot him for it."

Redlands police agreed he shouldn't have fired.

Rodriguez, 34, was arrested on suspicion of murder Wednesday after Marcus, a Redlands East Valley High student, was killed earlier that evening, his body found in an alley adjacent to Rodriguez's Brockton Avenue home.

Rodriguez is being held at Central Detention Center in San Bernardino without bail. Police have so far declined to discuss a motive for the shooting.

A woman who was in tears answered the door of Rodriguez's home Thursday and declined to comment. Several young children stood behind her.

Officers received reports of shots being fired at 10:17 p.m. in the 1000 block of Post Street. They went to the area and found Green dead, a news release said.

Lisa Munguia, who said Thursday that she has known Marcus since he was very young, said her son Armando Contreras ran to Marcus' side.

"Armando slapped him trying to wake him up," Munguia said.

Marcus lived with his aunt in Highland and would visit his mother a couple of streets down from Munguia, who lives next door to Rodriguez. Marcus' father is not a part of his life.

What appeared to be marijuana plants were visible in Rodriguez's yard through a bedroom window in Munguia's home. Gonzales said Rodriguez had a permit to grow marijuana for medicinal purposes. That could not be immediately confirmed Thursday.

Gonzales said other youngsters would steal the buds. Gonzales said she didn't know what her son did with them.

Munguia and Marcus' friends described him as someone who loved skateboarding so much, he'd travel long distances on his board even when he had bus passes in his pocket. He and Armando liked to skate to a park in Yucaipa and would also roll to San Bernardino.

"He was a great kid," Munguia said.

Friends gathered in the alley Thursday afternoon to mourn Marcus' death. They consoled his mother and put up a small memorial that included a stuffed animal, flowers, candles and signs they penned on the spot.

Marcus had a big personality and liked to try to make people laugh, friends said, and he would stick up for anyone being picked on. Marcus made people feel wanted.

It's unclear whether the high school plans any observance of Marcus' death. A school employee on campus said she was told to refer all questions to the school district office. No one at the district office knew about any plans.

"The district is saddened by the tragic event that occurred last night involving a shooting of a Redlands East Valley High School student," the district wrote in a statement. "The district is providing crisis response at the school site and in the student's class. Our heart goes out to the victim's family and friends."