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Cedar Rapids Symphony trombonist dies in car crash

By Nicole Schuppert

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CEDAR RAPIDS -- Longtime Cedar Rapids musician Bill Behrens was killed in a car accident Thursday during a college visit with his son in Appleton, Wis.

Behrens, 49, was with the Cedar Rapids Symphony since 1980, often as principal trombonist.

He taught low brass instruments as an adjunct professor at Coe and Cornell colleges and gave music lessons out of his home at 202 26th St. Dr. SE.

As part of the campus visit, Behrens and his oldest son, Christian, sat in on an orchestra rehearsal at Lawrence University.

Christian, 17, a trombonist like his father, plans to major in music when he graduates from Washington High School next year.

That night, the father and son spent an hour playing music together, as they had since Christian was 11.

Behrens dropped Christian off at the dorms and drove the family minivan toward his hotel.

From what Laura Behrens has been told, her husband apparently lost his way sometime after 11 p.m.

He missed a T-intersection and was thrown from the minivan, which landed on top of him. A property owner discovered the accident in a wooded lot the next morning.

Sheriff's officials notified Laura Behrens of her husband's death.

Officials at Lawrence University pulled Christian from his campus visit into the admissions office, where his mother broke the news to him by phone.

University officials put Christian on a plane home, back to his mom and 12-year-old brother, Isaac.

"When we got Christian from the airport and came home, we got in the house and the very first thing Christian did was sit me down on the couch and say, 'Mom, his last day was a happy one,' " Laura Behrens said.

"They got to listen to an orchestra play, and they practiced together for an hour or so on Thursday night, and he got to be part of this really important step in his son's life. I can't ask for much more than that."

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