



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/SANDI KRASOWS

The Underground Gym's Peter Panetta cleans the van that the gym acquired through the support of Christopher Jean. Jean was murdered last week.

Gym, shelter will miss Jean

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A Thunder Bay man who was murdered last week near Elk Lake is being remembered as a generous person by two local charitable groups.

Peter Panetta, founder of the city's Underground Gym, said Christopher Jean was a long-time supporter of the facility, and donated about \$4,000 through his construction company that allowed the gym to purchase a van that's proven critical to its services.

Jean, 32, was found dead shortly after 1 a.m. Thursday in a cabin near Elk Lake, a small community in James Township in eastern Ontario.

Jean's father-in-law, 55-year-old Dwane Turk, was charged with second-degree murder. Turk, however, died while in custody at the North Bay District Jail, police there confirmed Wednesday.

The coroner's office is investigating, and few details were available.

"We've used the van to take kids to boxing competitions, outings," Panetta said Wednesday.

"I pick up kids on the way to the gym, and I drop them off at home, as well. Just for safety's sake, for a lot of the little ones."

And, he reiterated, the van has been critical in giving as many kids as possible access to the gym.

"I've got a pickup truck," he said. "How am I going to take kids on outings? How am I going to take kids home, stuff like that? It's huge, it's just huge."

Jean made several monetary donations to the gym over the years, Panetta said, which went to pur-

chase equipment for the Simpson Street facility.

"He was a very quiet man with a very, very big heart," Panetta said. "He believed in what we were doing."

"From what he told me, he liked the grassroots approach that we use, the family-type atmosphere," he said. "They're the forgotten kids, that's what he said."

Shelter House was also the recipient of donations from Jean, the agency's executive director Cal Rankin said Wednesday.

"Chris has been very generous to the shelter over the last six or seven years, giving very generous amounts," Rankin said. "He came in and we sat and talked at length several times, and he had quite a profound understanding and compassion for the people that we serve."

"We'll miss him."

Jean's father Marcel said Wednesday that he wanted his son to be recognized for "being the philanthropist that he was."

Jean said his son chose to support the Underground Gym and Shelter House because he wanted to help children in need — the younger ones who made use of the gym, and the older ones who found themselves at Shelter House.

"He did a lot of things that he didn't want praise for when he was alive," Jean said. "I want him recognized now."

"He didn't donate a lot of time, he donated a lot of money; he didn't have time," he said.

"He worked very hard. He worked long hours at his profession, but he donated money to help those organizations."