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Girl Injured in Fall From Basement Stairs at Teen Party with Alcohol, Two Arrests

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A Darien girl fell from a basement stairway and hurt her head late Saturday night during a teenage party with alcohol on Half Mile Road, Darien police said.

Police arrested two people that night: One, a nanny who knew about the party and the alcohol being served at it; the other, an 18-year-old Post 53 member, off-duty, who moved the girl, which risked further injury to the girl, police said.

The girl was taken by Darien Emergency Medical Services-Post 53 to Stamford Hospital for further evaluation, police said. Police did not say what her condition was.

Police described what happened with this account, including accusations not proven in court:

At 11:59 p.m., Saturday, police were called to 88 Half Mile Road by a "third party" caller who said a girl had fallen down a flight of stairs and was injured.

Although the stairs led to the basement, where the teenage party was taking place, she had been moved just outside the pool house on the property.

Police spoke with Nicholas Branca, 18, of Shipway Lane, who told them that he hadn't seen her fall but saw her on the floor. Branca, an emergency medical technician with Darien EMS-Post 53, but not on duty that night, helped her up the stairs and to the pool house.

He "gave conflicting accounts of the reason the victim was moved from the location of the fall," the police news release said. He said he had found her at the bottom of the stairs and

"Officers determined that Branca had not witnessed the fall and had no medically valid reason for moving the patient," the news release said. "The move placed the patient at risk of further injury. This caused the officers to believe that Branca acted recklessly by moving the patient."

Branca told police he and some friends had gone to the party after a sporting event that night. He was arrested on a charge of reckless endangerment and later released on a \$2,000 bond. He is scheduled to appear Feb. 26 in state Superior Court in Stamford.

When police first arrived at the scene, they spoke to Deborah Hope, 53, of Bridgeport, the nanny at the home. While speaking with her, officers heard "a male voice yelling that everyone should run and that the police had arrived," the news release said.

When police looked at the stairs where the girl fell, they saw signs that a party with alcohol had taken place in the basement.

They also found a note indicating that the nanny, Hope, knew that the party was taking place and that minors would be drinking alcohol there. Police didn't describe the note further or state what it said.

Hope, a resident of Jewett Avenue in Bridgeport, was arrested on a charge of providing alcohol to minors and later released on a \$5,000 bond. She is scheduled to appear Feb. 26 in state Superior Court in Stamford.

Police made this statement in the news release:

- The Darien Police would like to remind the public about the inherent danger of gatherings where minors consume alcohol.

- In addition to being a violation of Connecticut Law, the safety of those involved can be compromised by poor judgment and bad decision-making.
- This agency will thoroughly investigate all reports of underage consumption of alcohol as we are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our residents.

Correction: Nicholas Branca's address is on Shipway Lane, not Driftway Lane, as originally reported.