Markie Voyles, a stand out cross country athlete, who represented Macon County's Cross Country team in 2007, died in a tragic automobile accident, October 26, 2008, in White County.

Markie, 17, was the only passenger in a 1995 Nissan pickup truck driven by Travis B. Young, 18 of Sparta. According to a report by Trooper David Hickey, of the Tennessee Highway Patrol, the vehicle was traveling West on Bunker Hill Road, in White County, and veered off the west side of the roadway and struck a tree on the passenger's side.

Information from the report stated neither Voyles nor Young were wearing a seatbelt and alcohol could have been a contributing factor.

Markie Voyles attended White County High School in Sparta, after she moved from California to Tennessee with her family in the summer of 2006.

"WCHS did not have a cross country team," Head Cross Country Coach Glen Gattis said Monday, explaining that before the cross country season begins each year, a jamboree at Cookeville High School is held, which is where he first saw Markie run.

"The next Saturday, she won the Macon County Invitational," Gattis recalled. "As the year progressed, her father, Mark Voyles, began talking to me about co-oping with Macon County High School," he said.

“No other School Board near White County was willing to let her run for their school, and I knew she was an awesome athlete. He did not have to ask me twice,” Gattis declared.

Coach Gattis talked to the Macon County High School Principal, Mr. Thaxton and the Director of Schools, Mike Prock. They both agreed and took it before the School Board. The School Board agreed, and then the TSSAA refused their request.

“I appealed to the Director of the TSSAA, Mr. Ronnie Carter, explaining that White County would not hire a Track Coach, and no other school would let her run for them. If Markie could not run for us, then she would not be able to run track in 2007.” They finally agreed.

Markie ran for Macon County High School on a cooperative program between White County and Macon County during the school year of 2006-2007.

Attending a different school for her academics, some may think it must have been hard to make an “outsider” a part of the hometown team, but Markie had no trouble fitting in.

“Markie was a great kid and a great athlete,” Coach Gattis whispered, adding she made friends instantly.

It was difficult road getting Markie approved to run for Macon County, and one that proved to be worth it all. After she became a double-state champion on the running track, winning both the A/AA 1600m and the A/AA 3200m while representing Macon County High School, and also finishing tenth overall at the 2007 AAA State Cross Country Championship, White County High School reinstituted it’s track and field team, with Voyles leading the way and her dad backing her every step, as the assistant track coach.

The Macon County coach, who did not take no for answer, and fought to give her a starting chance, has applauded her every success and traveled back to White County on Sunday, to console the mourning family. Team members Brandon Mahaney, and Steven Snyder also made the long drive to honor their fallen team mate.

“We were all real close,” Brandon’s dad Teddy Mahaney said Monday, explaining that Markie’s parents, Mark and Merritt Voyles instantly connected to the other parents who were cheering on their kids.

In the last cross country meet Markie ran in, Thursday, October 23rd, she captured her third straight Region 4 title and earned her fourth consecutive journey to the State Competition to be held this coming Saturday, October 30, 2008.

Macon County Cross Country Champion Brandon Mahaney will be participating in Saturday’s competition with one former team member missing from the starting lineup.

“She took the 4AAA region title on Thursday and was looking forward to competing at the state meet next Saturday,” Markie’s parents wrote on a website, adding, “She loved running and all of the friends she had made over the years through the sport. We just wanted to thank all of you who knew and loved Markie as much as we did. We were truly blessed to have her for the time that we did, although so brief.”

“Markie’s parents said they plan on coming to the meet on Saturday, because that is what Markie would want,” Teddy Mahaney noted.

“Brandon and Markie were very good friends, always comparing their awards and metals on which one had the most or which trophy was the biggest,” Chris Mahaney noted, adding, “Brandon even took Markie to his junior prom and they had a blast.”

Survivors include her parents, Mark and Merritt Voyles, of Sparta, and one little sister, Morgan Voyles, of Sparta.

Services for Markie Voyles have been scheduled as follows:

Wednesday, October 29, 2008: Visitation/Viewing at Central Church of Christ from 4:00 - 8:00

p.m. at 45 N. Main Street, Sparta, TN.

Thursday, October 30, 2008: Funeral Services at Central Church of Christ at 3:00p.m. With burial to follow at Church of Christ Corinth.

In lieu of flowers we have set up a 'Markie Voyles Athletic Scholarship' fund.

Bank of America
269 W. Bockman Way
Sparta, TN 38583
ATTN: Vickie Brady