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North Freedom woman ID'd as train accident victim

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NORTH FREEDOM — The Sauk County Sheriff's Department has identified the 66-year-old woman killed in a train accident Saturday as Linda L. Rowe of North Freedom.

The sheriff's department reported that Rowe was working as a volunteer at Mid-Continent Railway Museum when she slipped beneath a moving train engine Saturday.

Two brakemen, an engineer and a conductor were on board the engine, which was on its way to switch to another track, an operation that takes several minutes to complete, said Sauk County Sheriff Chip Meister. He said it appeared that Rowe slipped or lost her balance, fell and was run over.

"On the way back is when they noticed the victim laying on the railroad tracks," Meister said.

The incident is under investigation by the sheriff's department, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and federal railroad safety officials also have been notified.

Meister said Rowe's death appears to have been accidental.

"It's a horrible accident," he said.

Nancy Miller of the Mid-Continent Railway Museum said the museum does not have any comment on the incident at this time. It remains open for business.

The museum offers three daily train services for riders on restored historical trains and passenger cars along a seven-mile rail line between North Freedom and LaRue that once was part of the Chicago & Northwestern Railway.

An obituary for Rowe states she was an avid baker and a longtime volunteer at the museum. She had also been an employee at the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Sauk County in Baraboo, where she worked until her retirement in the fall of 2012.

Cathy Bindl, who worked at the ADRC with Rowe, said her friend had a kind heart and cared deeply about other people and doing the right thing. She worked at the front desk for a number of years.

"She was kind of the face and smile of the ADRC, and she had a great smile," said Bindl.

The petite woman enjoyed driving her pickup truck, which was her pride and joy, the former colleague said.

“She loved working at the railroad museum,” Bindl said, adding that the train enthusiast had showed her photos of some of the restoration work she had completed at the museum along with her significant other, Skip Lichter.

Bindl said that Rowe should be remembered for her kindness, rather than for the accident that took her life. Rowe valued other people, was a proud mom and grandma and took great joy in serving her community, she said. Her happy greetings were a caring presence in the lives of some area residents who lived alone and called the ADRC daily to check in via the Tele-Assure program.

“She was just kind,” Bindl said. “I don’t think you can say that word enough. And a good friend. She was a very good friend to me.”