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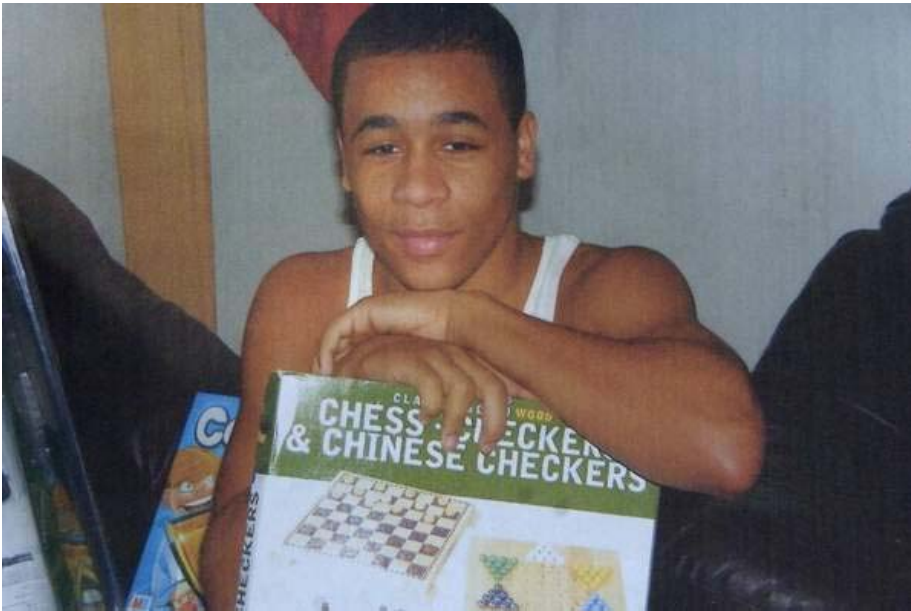
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Brain-dead son taken off life support and dies



By [John Davis](#)

Published: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 4:44 p.m.

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PUNTA GORDA - Arthur "Ace" Johnson III, 19, whose planned organ harvesting prompted protests at Charlotte Regional Medical Center, was taken off life support and died about 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, his mother said.

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Johnson's parents had sought to remove him from Charlotte Regional to get a second opinion on whether he was actually brain-dead or if he could have recovered.

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"Nobody would take the case," said Barbara Austin, Johnson's mother, who fought Sunday and Monday against taking her son off life support and harvesting his organs. "We couldn't get a judge to sign off on the case."

The hospital, family members say, urged Barbara Austin and Arthur Johnson Jr. to shut down life support and have their son's organs harvested Monday at noon, but they resisted. On Tuesday, they made the decision to shut down the machines keeping him alive; his organs were not harvested.

"I just couldn't keep watching him suffer," Barbara Austin said.

Charlotte Regional halted a plan to harvest Johnson's organs on Monday after an outcry by the family, which had earlier consented to the donation but later changed course. Family members said they were turned off by the rapid timeline and extent of the organ harvesting, including the planned removal of Johnson's lungs and corneas. They also wanted to seek a second opinion on whether he was actually brain-dead.

But hospital officials, the family said, continued to push forward with the organ donation because Johnson had provided consent last year and his family had signed off on the donation last week. But when a furor over the harvesting erupted, and Johnson's family and friends began protesting on the sidewalk outside the medical center, the harvesting group pulled back and the hospital also relented.

Hospital officials said in a statement Monday that they tried to be sensitive to the family's needs.

Punta Gorda Police say Johnson, who turned 19 Monday, was in his apartment on Narranja Street when he was shot in the head shortly after 7 p.m. Thursday. They have redacted many details in their report but have listed the shooting as an attempted suicide. He was pronounced brain-dead by doctors later Thursday.

Family members say police may reclassify the case as an accidental death. Authorities declined to comment, citing the open investigation.

Johnson was a senior at The Academy, an alternative school in Charlotte County. The middle child of five siblings, his parents called him Bart because his hair resembled TV cartoon character Bart Simpson.

Johnson was known among friends for his artistic ability and singing voice. His stepfather, Joe Austin, was helping him open a tattoo shop. He said Monday they had purchased the supplies and were looking at a rental space inside an area strip mall, with hopes to open the shop next month.

The body will be turned over to the medical examiner's office; funeral arrangements had not been made Tuesday.

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Arthur Johnson taken off life support; ...

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