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April 2011 designated as Michigan Student Athlete Cardiac Awareness Month

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By **Brittany Shammas** | The Grand Rapids Press

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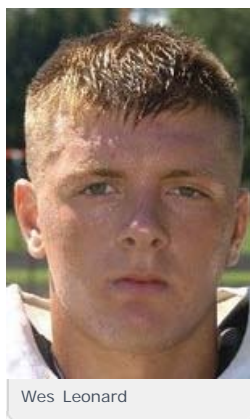
LANSING -- April 2011 has been named Michigan Student Athlete Cardiac Awareness Month under resolutions passed Wednesday by the Michigan Senate and Michigan House of Representatives.

Education about cardiac issues is necessary to help save lives, Sen. John Pappageorge, R-Troy, who introduced the Senate resolution, said in a statement released Thursday.

"We can make a difference in the lives of young people and their families and help prevent some tragedies from occurring," he said in the release.

Rep. Tim Bledsoe D-Grosse Pointe introduced the House resolution.

Cardiac awareness has received heightened attention since Fennville High School basketball star **Wes Leonard** collapsed and died after scoring the winning basket on March 3. Leonard's death was caused by dilated cardiomyopathy -- an enlarged heart -- that triggered an abnormal heartbeat, **an autopsy showed**.



Wes Leonard

Borgess Health Institute announced Thursday **it will provide cardiac screenings** for \$10 to 200 area students.

At least 47 Michigan students have died of sudden cardiac arrest and related causes since December 1999, the release stated.

Randy Gillary, the father of Kimberly Gillary, who died after suffered a sudden cardiac arrest in a high school water polo game, said in the release the Gillary family is deeply thankful for the measure.

"This is a major step in raising awareness of the dangers of hidden cardiac problems with our high school student athletes," he said.

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