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Des Plaines man dies in swimming accident in Mexico

By Eileen Daday | Daily Herald Staff

Contact writer



Arnie Piechocki

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Buzz up!

A key executive in the Wirtz Corporation has died in a freak swimming accident off the coast of Mexico.

Arnie Piechocki, 47, of Des Plaines, ran Wirtz Realty for the prominent Chicago family, overseeing its 27 buildings and 2,000 apartments on Chicago's north lakefront, as well as warehouses in Bensenville, Wood Dale and Elk Grove Village that house Wirtz Beverage operations, along with that operation's headquarters in Schaumburg.

"I can't believe he's not here," said Rocky Wirtz, chairman of Wirtz Coporation, calling from the Wirtz Realty office in Chicago. "I trusted him implicitly."

Mr. Piechocki had been vacationing in Cabo San Lucas with his wife and two children, and three other Northwest suburban families over spring break when the accident occurred.

According to friends, last week Mr. Piechocki and his son, Brent, as well as their friends had taken a water taxi out to Lover's Beach, a secluded island and popular destination point where the Sea of Cortez meets the Pacific Ocean.

Commenting on the heat, Mr. Piechocki asked the others if they wanted to take a dip in the ocean, and when everyone else declined, he dove in himself.

"It was 15 seconds and he didn't come back," said his friend, Joe Mangiamele of Arlington Heights. "We thought he was playing a joke on us."

Mr. Piechocki's son reportedly spotted his father drifting further out, and he screamed and ran in after him. Mangiamele followed, attempting to bring both of them back.

"The waves were real violent," Mangiamele said.

With the aid of others, including Michael Tuccori of Des Plaines and Jim Malapanes of Arlington Heights, they were able to retrieve both father and son and immediately began CPR on Mr. Piechocki.

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