

timesunion.comprint story 
back 

'She was an enormous risk taker'

Family, friends of designer fatally injured in bicycle accident say they'll honor her dream, memory

By **DANIELLE FURFARO**, Staff writer

[Click byline for more stories by writer.](#)

First published: Saturday, June 9, 2007

TROY -- Standing in front of five young women wearing T-shirts reading "We (heart) Diva," the mother and brother of fashion designer Diva de Loayza addressed the public Friday, thanking her friends, employees and hospital staff.

De Loayza, 40, died Wednesday, one week after being struck by a minivan while riding her bicycle on Western Avenue in Albany.

"In our minds, she was a heroine," said her brother, Hugh de Loayza. "She passed away peacefully and with dignity."

Her family also vowed to keep open her four Some Girls boutiques.

De Loayza, 40, had been in critical condition at Albany Medical Center Hospital for the past week. She died after being taken off life support.

Over the past five years, de Loayza had opened Some Girls stores in Albany, Troy, Syracuse and Ithaca. As a student at the Parsons School of Design in New York City, she founded the House of Bimbo clothing line. Its T-shirts are emblazoned with irreverent slogans such as "Dirty Blonde," "Boy Beater" and "Troilet."

"I look at Diva's life, and it was a work of art," said Winifred de Loayza, 69. "She was an enormous risk taker."

At the age of 20, Diva was diagnosed with lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease. The disease only increased her drive to succeed in life, her mother said.

"She said, 'Mom, I have a life; I'm going to New York,' " her mother said. "She was a star that was at the zenith of her power."

Hugh de Loayza said the family has set up a fund in Diva's name with the New York Bicycling Coalition, which has launched a Share the Road program to be taught in driver education classes. The program also encourages riders to wear helmets and carry identification. De Loayza was doing neither when she was hit; for the first two days she was in the hospital, her identity was unknown. Some Girls will sell the "We (heart) Diva" shirts. A portion of the proceeds will go to the coalition.

Hugh de Loayza, an avid biker, said his sister had called him just a few weeks earlier to discuss her renewed interest in cycling.

"She had an exercise regimen, and she was transferring that to a new sport," he said.

Some Girls buyer Rachel Wrightson choked up when she spoke of her boss and friend.

"She taught me in life and in business that you carry on regardless of the obstacles in front of you," the 26-year-old said. "That's what we are going to do."

De Loayza was biking west on Western Avenue when she approached the University Place intersection, where westbound traffic had a red light. A minivan traveling east had the green light, made a left turn onto University Place and struck her.

Diva de Loayza's kidneys were donated, saving the lives of two other people, her brother said.

The family said it is now planning a celebration of Diva's life.

Winifred de Loayza said she and her daughter shared an average of four phone calls a day.

"Still, in the quiet moments, I think 'I'll call Diva,' she said. "But I can't."

Furfaro can be reached at 454-5097 or by e-mail at dfurfaro@timesunion.com.

All Times Union materials copyright 1996-2007, Capital Newspapers Division of The Hearst Corporation, Albany, N.Y.

[HOME](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [SUBSCRIBE TO NEWSPAPER](#) | [HOW TO ADVERTISE](#) | [PRIVACY RIGHTS](#) | [COPYRIGHT](#) | [CLASSROOM ENRICHMENT](#)