

Homeless

3.22-02

# Memorial scheduled for slain homeless man

SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

Michael Todd Blanton spent most days at Bookshop Santa Cruz, sitting in an easy chair or on a bench reading quietly.

He also volunteered at St. Anthony's **SANTA CRUZ** Soup Kitchen, drying dishes and helping with other tasks.

Not much else is known about the 52-year-old homeless man whose beaten and strangled body was found Feb. 21 in some shrubs near the San Lorenzo River.

But organizers of a memorial service for Blanton hope to bring his story to life and cast a light on the lives of other homeless residents.

"We want to recognize the dignity of

---

**'We want to recognize the dignity of one person who may have died unremembered.'**

REV. MARK STETZ, PASTOR,  
HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH

---

one person who may have died unremembered," said the Rev. Mark Stetz, pastor of Holy Cross Catholic Church. "We want to recall what we do know of him and entrust him to the care of our God."

Tia Lauren Hitt, 20, and James Landrum Jones, 22, both of Fort Worth, Texas, are charged with murder. Inves-

tigators believe the couple killed Blanton after a dispute about a campsite. Prosecutor Christine McGuire said Blanton was defenseless. His right hand had been amputated after an accident.

While "lamenting the tragedy," it's also important for the community to think about how it could have been prevented, Stetz said.

"We all share a communal responsibility," he said.

Community members will have the opportunity to share stories about Blanton's life and discuss homeless issues at a reception immediately after a brief service at 7 p.m. April 9 at Holy Cross, 126 High St.