

Football Player Shot In School Parking Lot

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Posted by : Randy

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BENTON, Mo. (semissourian.com) -- An outpouring of support is being shown for the victim of an accidental shooting in the parking lot of Kelly High School.



Prayer vigils, makeshift memorials, social media posts and signs throughout the rural community sent thoughts and prayers to the friends and family of 15-year-old sophomore Kaden Robert, remembered by many as always smiling and as a giving and caring person.

Scott County Sheriff Rick Walter said his office received a 911 call about the shooting at 8:16 p.m. Monday, according to a news release. At the scene, officers found an unresponsive 15-year-old boy with a gunshot wound to the head.

Robert was pronounced dead at 9 a.m. Tuesday at Saint Francis Medical Center by Scott County Coroner Scott Amick.

A preliminary investigation by the department said four boys were playing basketball at the school Monday afternoon, and one of the boys provided transportation with his grandfather's truck, which contained two firearms. After the group finished playing basketball, Robert and his friends returned to the truck, intending to go to Robert's house.

After everyone got in the truck, someone passed a handgun to Robert, accidentally discharging it and striking Robert in the head, according to the release.

At this point in the investigation, Walter said there is no reason to believe foul play was involved.

"These young men were all good friends and spent a lot of time together," he said. "This is a very unfortunate incident, and it will touch the lives of many people for years to come."

The Kelly Hawks Football Facebook page asked for prayers for the Robert family Tuesday and announced all football activities were canceled until July 28, but encouraged students to "leave things along the fence for Kaden."

"Out of respect for the family, I won't go into any detail," the post read. "Kaden was, is and always will be loved by the Hawks! We love you #14".

In addition to the post, two black images were posted on the football page, one bearing the initials K.R. in white type; the other with "#14".

A prayer vigil was held at 5 p.m. Tuesday, where more than 100 people gathered to remember the life of Robert, an honor student and a football and baseball player. Students, parents, family members, faculty, staff and other community members shed tears, shared hugs and prayers and stood with hands held in a circle on the football field. Students signed a football for Robert and brought flowers, balloons and signs to hang along the end zone fence, where the number "14" was spelled out in red Solo cups.

A second prayer vigil was held Tuesday evening at St. Denis Catholic Church, where the Robert

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family are parishioners. Vehicles flowed into neighboring parking lots and along the highway, with standing room only during the service.

The Rev. John Harth performed the vigil, asking friends and family to look toward God for guidance in times of difficulty.

The Rev. Michael Casteel, priest of St. Denis and St. Lawrence Catholic Church in New Hamburg, Missouri, cut his vacation short to return for services and was expected to arrive in St. Louis late Tuesday night.

Fara Jones, superintendent of the Kelly School District, released the following statement Tuesday:

"Unfortunately, a tragic event has occurred at our district. Yesterday evening, after school hours, a student was injured by a firearm on the district's school parking lot and has been hospitalized. Our hearts and prayers are with the injured student and his family at this time. The district prohibits the presence of firearms or weapons on the premises of its school. The district takes this matter very seriously and is cooperating fully with law enforcement in its investigation of this matter."

Kaden Robert pitched to a Scott City batter on May 19 during the first inning of a district baseball game.

During the vigil, Harth told a story that portrayed Robert's giving side. Just a short weeks ago during a baseball tournament, a boy with cancer sat in a wheelchair across the field. Robert's coach told his team they were going to win the championship for the boy.

At the end of the game, after the team won the championship, Robert walked over to the young boy, gave him the trophy he had just won and told him, "You are the real champion."