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One last gathering for grief, memories

At 5th Fairport funeral, all came 'one more time for the McClures'

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Senior editor

A wrenching series of goodbyes ended Tuesday with the funeral of Meredith McClure, one of five recent graduates of Fairport High School who were killed last Tuesday when their car collided with a trailer-truck.

Separate funerals for the four other young women who died — Hannah Congdon, 18; Katherine "Katie" Shirley, 18; Sara Monnat, 18; and Bailey Goodman, 17 — were held Monday.

"We're all emotionally spent and continue to be devastated by the magnitude of this tragedy," said David Paddock, the Fairport High School principal, who was at all five services. "But the funerals were the first steps toward healing."

Well over 1,000 mourners attended the service for Meredith, 17, a varsity cheerleader at Fairport and the daughter of Diane and Ray McClure. A similar number of mourners attended each of the other funerals.

The McClures had been members of Rochester Christian Reformed Church in Penfield for several years. The service was held nearby at the larger Browncroft Community Church in Penfield.

"The cheerleaders were there, the guidance counselors were there, all of the other families of those who died were there," said Jon Hunter, the Fairport district's superintendent. "Everybody came one more time, even though there wasn't much left to give. Everybody came one more time for the McClures."

Classmates and friends spoke at the funeral, as did Meredith's sister, Charise, and brother, Logan.

"Their memories were of a young kid who was just playful and joyful in everything she did," Hunter said.

That, too, was Paddock's lasting impression of Meredith, who planned to attend the State University at Buffalo this fall, majoring in international business.

"She just had a real sense of fun with a real sense of adventure," he said.

Meredith had missed her junior year at Fairport High because of a family move. But the McClures were back for her senior year, and Meredith picked up where she had left off on the cheerleading team and in other activities.

As he handed Meredith her diploma on June 21, five days before her death, Paddock said, "Meredith, I'm really glad you came back to Fairport."

As it turned out, those were the last words he spoke to her.

"I feel good I said that," Paddock said after the services Tuesday. "It was true. She brought back spirit."

Paddock also said that the school is planning a celebration of the lives of the five young women who died. It will take place in August, before the members of the class of 2007 move on to other pursuits.

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