

Colborne mourns tragic death

Teen always put family first

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NORTHUMBERLAND - A Colborne boy will be remembered for always putting his family first.

Mitchell Ferguson, 14, a Grade 8 student at Colborne Public School (CPS), died Friday, Dec. 12, when he and a few friends were tobogganing down a popular hill on Elgin Street W. in Colborne. While riding tandem, Mitchell tumbled from a GT Sno Racer and struck a tree.

"Accidents happen," said Mike Ferguson, Mitchell's uncle. "I grew up in this town and my Dad and I went down that hill a thousand times."

When Mitchell's Dad Darryl, a long-distance truck driver, was working, his son served a fatherly role to his Mom Robin and sister Andrea, who attends East Northumberland Secondary School (ENSS).

"He called his Mom every day from school," Mike said.

Mitchell's online memorial paints a picture of a responsible young man, who loved his family.

"He was his dad's trucking buddy and together during his summer break, they logged thousand of miles together," the memorial states. "He was the love of his mom's life and when his dad was away he was the man of the house looking after his mother and sister."

Mike said the Fergusons were going through a difficult time on Monday afternoon as they made funeral arrangements, but the strength of the community has overwhelmed them. Residents



Facebook photo

Mitchell Ferguson, 14, died on Dec. 12 after he hit a tree while tobogganing with friends.

Bill Tremblay/The Independent

right, Flowers have been placed at the base of a tree that claimed the life of 14-year-old Mitchell Ferguson Friday night.

have rushed to the Ferguson home, Mike said, with constant visits from CPS and ENSS students, family and friends.

"We have enough food here to feed the entire town," he added.

Mitchell's academic prowess matured in recent years and last month he earned the CPS Student of the Month award along with an Author of the Month distinction.

At lunchtime, Mitchell favoured dining on poutine at Vito's Restaurant and Pizzeria in Colborne to share a laugh with friends and classmates. Along with playing trombone (a recently adopted pastime) and drums for the CPS jazz band, Mitchell enjoyed playing hockey and badminton.



But he often prioritized family matters, his uncle said, unlike many teenagers. Mitchell's online memorial describes his greatest gift as being his ability to make everyone around him laugh.

"He has left us with so many memories and classic one-liners to keep us laughing for years to come," the memorial states.

Mike said Mitchell's passing has even shaken the family's three dogs as they've recognized the absence of his habitual return home from school.

"The dogs are having a hard time now," Mike said, "because Mitchell has cuddle time with them everyday after school."

CPS staff braced for the inevi-

table emotional shock weighed on the tight-knit community when class resumed Monday morning.

"We have two school board councillors who will remain at the school as long as needed," said Judy Malfara, communications officer with Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. "Teachers explained to the intermediate students that it's OK to grieve and that people grieve in different ways."

Staff designated the school's library as a temporary "quiet place" for students to mourn the loss.

"The gym has been set aside for students who feel they need to burn off energy," Ms. Malfara said. "There have also been quite a few parents coming in."

Two-hundred students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 attend CPS.

"It's a small community," Ms. Malfara added, "and people there stick together."

In lieu of flowers, his family has requested donations be made to the CPS jazz band to help cover the cost of the Montreal trip in April for his fellow band members.

Visitation will be held on Friday, Dec. 19, from 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. at the MacCoubrey Funeral Home, 11 King St. W., Colborne. Mitchell's funeral will take place on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 2 p.m. at the Colborne United Church. Donations can be made through the funeral home's website at www.maccoubrey.com.

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