

A community coming together: Candlelight vigil to be held tonight for 6- year-old Liam Roberts

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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JERSEYVILLE - After Monday's tragic news of the death of 6-year-old Liam Roberts hit the small town of Jerseyville, many members of the community have expressed their need to come together.

Notes, balloons and stuffed animals left for Roberts at his family's residence all express condolences, and a shared thought of "if only we would have known." Roberts arrived at the Jersey Community Hospital last Friday evening. He was already dead. He weighed only 17 pounds. His father, Mike Roberts, 42, and his stepmother, Georgena Roberts, 42, both of Jerseyville, were charged with first-degree murder following Liam Roberts's death. His 7-year-old brother, identified as A.P.R. in a release from Jersey County State's Attorney Ben Goetten, was placed in ICU, suffering from what was described as "extreme malnutrition."

Feeling the community's collective pain, Missy Walker - a former neighbor of Georgena Roberts - said she wanted to do something to allow the city to grieve. So, tonight at 6 p. m. in the county's fairgrounds, just north of Downtown Jerseyville on Highway 67, a candlelight vigil will be held in honor of little Liam Roberts.

"I'm a mother of two, and a lifetime resident of Jersey County," Walker said via Facebook Messenger. "It's tragic to hear of any child's death - especially when it's at the hands of their own parents - but, this was across town, within walking distance of the home this took place. by the hands of a woman who I've known for many years, and was her next door neighbor for several years.

"It's such a sad horrific thing that happened to Liam and his siblings," Walker continued. "There's nothing we can do to bring this baby back, but I wanted to somehow bring this community back together, and remember a child most of us didn't even know existed. Our community is angry, sickened and question how this even happened over the course of two years, and no one saved them; no one protected them.

"We want awareness and changes to make sure no other child ever has to endure such horrible abuse. We want answers, and we want justice. Tonight, we want to spread love in a community where there's lots of hate."

The vigil will have candles from Angel Ministries of Jerseyville, but Walker said people were also encouraged to bring candles from home. A prayer will be offered by Pastor Bo Schultz from Fieldon Baptist Church shortly after 6 p.m. Walker said anyone who had words to offer for Liam Roberts would also be allowed to speak following that prayer and lighting of candles.

Walker described Georgena Roberts as an "evil woman" following the charges, but said she did not know her well previously, despite being her neighbor eight years ago.

"She was very secluded and kept to herself mostly," Walker said. "My children are 18 and 13 - close to her children's ages - but they never played together."

She continued to say she had not kept in contact with Georgena Roberts for the past eight years, but said they saw each other "plenty," with both of them living in Jerseyville. Walker also said she was Facebook friends with Georgena Roberts, and would keep with her posts and life events. Walker said Georgena Roberts did not post a lot about Liam Roberts or his brother.

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