

Lights for Liam: Jerseyville gathers to remember 6-year-old boy

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
November 9 2017 5:44 PM





JERSEYVILLE - More than 100 community members braved frigid temperatures to honor the memory of Liam Roberts.



Roberts was only six years old and 17 pounds when he was pronounced dead on arrival at the Jersey Community Hospital last Friday evening. His father, Mike Roberts, and stepmother, Georgena Roberts, both 42, and both of Jerseyville, were charged with first-degree murder following his death. They were also charged with two counts of endangering the lives of children; one for Liam Roberts, and one for his 7-year-old brother, identified by the Jersey County State's Attorney as A.P.R. The charged are accused by authorities of depriving the brothers of food for punishment, leaving them "extremely malnourished."

A.P.R. was sent to a local ICU, where he was in stable condition as of Wednesday afternoon.

To honor Liam Roberts's memory, Jerseyville resident and former neighbor of Georgena Roberts, Missy Walker, organized a candlelight vigil for both boys at the Jersey County Fairgrounds Thursday night just after 6 p.m.

Baptist minister Bo Schultz of Fieldon said the event was a reminder of how a community needs to come together and speak up when something is wrong.

"We need to get back to the way it used to be in this country, when everyone knew their next door neighbors and took care of each other," he said. "We're too caught up in our own lives to care about each other these days."

His sentiments are similar to many in the community who have taken to social media to speak about their regrets of not knowing of the alleged abuse, which authorities claimed occurred over the course of nearly two years.

"It's going to take more than sentiment to fix this," Schultz said.

During his prayer, Schultz said he was searching for possible positive things to say of the situation, comparing Liam Roberts's struggle to Holocaust victims in concentration camps, adding it was worse than prisoners.

Instead, Schultz said everyone should grieve for the loss and failure of community to notice the problem, adding Liam Roberts "slipped through the cracks." He said someone should have done something regarding the situation.

He concluded saying nothing could have been done for Liam Roberts, but led a prayer for the other five siblings left behind and for the community to come together to recognize those in need and to hold itself accountable for the least among it.

A poem written for the tragedy was written and delivered by Marie Witt.

A neighbor said they had no way of knowing what was going on with the Roberts Family, stopping a small girl who wanted to offer a prayer.

"There were no toys in the yard or anything," she said. "We had no way of knowing."

That small child, Ayla Bick, then prayed Liam Roberts was "having a fun time in heaven."

Following the vigil, Bick's mother said her daughter did not know Liam Roberts, saying Bick just has "an incredibly kind heart."

The vigil concluded with a moment of silence and a prayer led by Schultz.



