



Staunton remembering tragic loss of two young sisters

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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STAUNTON - Madisen and Hailey Bertels, 17 and 20 respectively, were killed in a tragic crash on Interstate-55 near Hamel on Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2017.

That crash was caused when a large semi-truck struck as many as seven other vehicles, and several people were taken to nearby hospitals via ambulance and choppers. The Bertels sisters were pronounced dead at the scene a minute apart. Both sisters were wearing their safety belts in the 2010 Kia Forte sedan in which they were traveling southbound on the interstate. Madisen Bertels was driving and Hailey Bertels was in the backseat.

A third person, Vivian Vu, 19, of Joplin, Mo., succumbed to her injuries at a St. Louis hospital around 12:40 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 23.

A public visitation for the sisters will be held from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017, at the Staunton High School New Gym. Representatives from the Staunton School District said the visitation will allow people to remember the young women and gather together in the warmth, due to expected cold weather.

The family will have a private funeral for the young women this Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017, with Rev. George Gude.

A GoFundMe has also been created to benefit the father and surviving brothers of the two women. It was created by Amanda Gillihan of Dorsey, Illinois, and has raised \$4,545 of its \$10,000 goal. It has garnered donations from 55 people in the past four days.

Gillihan described the women's father, Dean Bertels, as a "loving father who is left to pick up the pieces and lay to rest." The family also includes two sons, Titan and Dallas Bertels.

In an update on that page, Gillihan said Dean Bertels has worked for her family's business, Gillihan Concrete, for 11 years, adding he is a "loyal and valued employee."

Many donations are coming from people who comment with prayers for the family as well as people who have lost their own children in traffic crashes. Some even shared photos with them and the young women.

According to their obituaries, Madisen and Hailey Bertels were survived by their father and brothers as well as their mother, Cassy Loflin of Staunton, a paternal grandfather, Allen Dean Bertels of Dorsey, maternal grandparents, Glen and Beverly Loflin of Staunton and several aunts, uncles and cousins.