

St. Joseph community bids emotional farewell to Laura Nowasad



By Brock Weir

Aside from her hamster, Butterscotch, butterflies were Laura Nowasad's favourite creatures.

Not only are they beautiful, but when caterpillars go into their cocoon they emerge, full of life, resurrected. This spirit was very much in the air last week as students, teachers, and parents gathered at St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School to remember eight-year-old Laura, a Grade Three student who lost her courageous battle with a rare form of brain cancer this August.

For many students, it was the first opportunity they had to remember Laura and share their grief as a whole, and they did so in a room festooned with thousands of butterflies, many of which were emblazoned with very personal memories of Laura.

As students gathered and found their place in the gym, Laura's classmates were the last to enter, and they did so in procession, each placing a candle on an altar erected in Laura's memory, before sharing memories of their good friend.

"Laura was my best friend," said Hayley. "We always had so much fun playing together. I remember our trip to Disneyworld. It was very special because it was Laura's fourth birthday and we had a nice celebration at a restaurant. Laura was very happy and excited when Mickey Mouse, Pluto and Goofy surprised us at the table. She was so excited that she fell asleep in her stroller on the way back. It was very funny and cute.

"I miss Laura very much, but I know she is not suffering anymore and I believe she is having fun with the angels in Heaven. Laura will always be special in my heart."

As kids gathered at the microphone, they shared memories of Laura's generosity, her giving spirit, her cheerful smile, and her love of animals - particularly little Butterscotch.

They shared poems, songs, and scripture, but the most personal memories were shared by Laura's parents, Mira and Janusz, who shared their overwhelming gratitude towards the Aurora community that came together this winter to raise money to support Laura's treatment, as well as their evermore overwhelming sense of loss.

"I was Laura's mummy and she was a very special girl," said Mira. "She always wanted to be with other people. She was a very busy girl and we wanted to give her the world. She was our only child, but she was a very busy child. Here, she was so happy to come and join in, and continue her education. She always wanted to go to school and be with her friends and teachers, she was always so eager to learn.

?Of course, we had so many plans for Laura, as parents, and Laura had plans for herself as well. Most of all, she loved animals so much and basically wanted to have a zoo at home. We had to make a decision that there was only so much room and she got a fish and, most recently, Butterscotch. There were plans for a cat and a dog, but we were waiting for her to be a little bit more responsible for caring and cleaning for them, but it seems that God had other plans for Laura and us, her family.

?There is so much love that we trust that she is in Heaven, and we are sure of that, that she is now resting. There are schools in heaven as well, and she goes to school, and she is as busy there as she was on Earth. We pray to God to take care of my Laura.?

Added Janusz: ?Love, love, love is all I can say, and it is all around us. Laura always loved school and she was always happy when she would come home on the bus. Let me thank you all for this memorial."

The Nowasad family plans to donate a bench to the St. Joseph school yard for students to remember Laura and allow her legacy to continue on.

