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DAILY SOUTHTOWN

# 'They were everything to me,' mom says after body of 2nd child found in river



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By **ALICIA FABBRE** and **ERIN GALLAGHER**

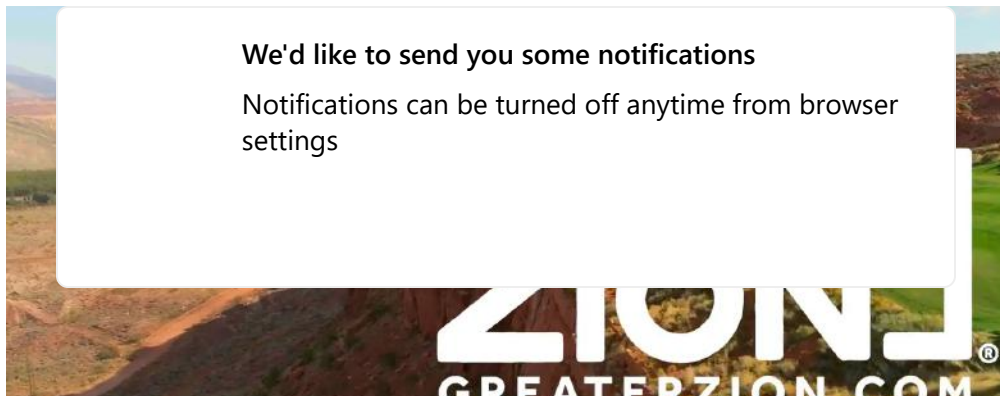
UPDATED: May 22, 2019 at 12:09 AM CDT

A Joliet family already mourning the death of a teenage girl learned Wednesday that the body of her younger brother was found in the Kankakee River, about 3 1/2 miles from where the siblings became trapped in turbulent water on Memorial Day near a dam in Wilmington.

The body of Eder Arroyo, 12, was found about 11 a.m. off Bardwell Island, about a half-mile west of Interstate 55 in Will County, authorities said.

Eder's sister, Abigail Arroyo, 13, was rescued from the water Monday after she had attempted to help her struggling brother, but she later died at a Joliet hospital.

"I don't know how I'm going to live without them," the children's mother,



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"I love them with all my heart," she said. "I will always love them."

Eder and Abigail were on a family outing Monday on South Island in Wilmington. Late in the afternoon, according to Wilmington Police Chief Phillip Arnold, Eder said he wanted to touch the waterfall created by the dam and went into the river despite being advised not to by friends.

"Once he got a certain distance he started to yell and couldn't get out, so the sister went in," Arnold said.

Two adult brothers from Blue Island, Ramon and Alvaro Ibarra, noticed the youths struggling and went in to help, but they also became trapped.

"Everything happened so fast," Adame said.

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Abigail Arroyo, 13 and her brother, Eder Arroyo, 12, both died from injuries they suffered after going into the Kankakee River near the Wilmington dam. Eder swam into the water to try to touch the waterfall and was pulled under. Abigail died after trying to save him.

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On Tuesday, about 70 people searched for the boy by boat, on land and in the air. Others walked through shallow parts of the river.

Officials were about to send a helicopter up to search Wednesday when word of the discovery of the body came.

"We focused our efforts downstream today," Wilmington Deputy Fire Chief Todd Friddle said.

An autopsy on Eder is scheduled for Thursday, according to the Will County coroner's office. Information about funeral arrangements was not available, but the family plans to have one service for the two children.

The part of the river near the dam where the children became trapped is "always an area that's been a problem," said Harold Damron, director of the Will County Emergency Management Agency.

Wilmington Mayor Marty Orr said the city is working with the state to eliminate danger at the site.

"Several (warning) signs are up and they have been up," Orr said at a news conference Wednesday.

Family and friends gathered Tuesday evening at the children's home in Joliet to offer condolences and help.

"They were very happy, very loving," family friend Argelia Pensado said outside the home.

Pensado said Eder was going to attend her daughter's quinceanera

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Adame on Wednesday thanked the Ibarra brothers, who tried to save her children, and she and wished them well.

"They fought to help them," she said.

*Erin Gallagher and Alicia Fabbre are freelance reporters.*

*Originally Published: June 2, 2016 at 7:30 AM CDT*

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