

## NEWS

# Franklin mourns for students, honors their bravery

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Blue-and-white balloons filled the skies Wednesday night, as the Franklin community came together to honor the heroism of a group of students during a rescue attempt last week in the Big Blue River.

Memorial services held for Jason Moran at Franklin High School's gym attracted hundreds of supporters from throughout the state. Those in attendance also mourned student Michael Chadbourne, who died this week after planning for the services had begun.

Moran, 17, and Chadbourne, 18, were swimming with three other classmates Friday in the river in Edinburgh, when Sarah McLevish, 16, Morgantown, was swept over a low-head dam. Her friends swam over the dam into the turbulent waters below in an attempt to save her.

Two other students — Trent Crabb, 17, and Mark Nally, 18, both Franklin — made it out of the water uninjured.

The school campus was covered with dozens of blue ribbons hanging from trees and lightposts.

A blue ribbon accompanied by the Twitter hashtag #FranklinStrong has become a poignant reminder of the loss. The phrase has also become a rallying cry for those struggling with their grief.

"The community has outdone itself once again. I am so proud of Franklin, as we have all come together to lift up the thoughts and prayers from all of the students and family members who are grieving," said Franklin Mayor Joe McGuinness.

"Never forget, lean on and support each other. ... This is our community, and together we will be stronger."

In the short walk from the front door to the gymnasium, the school's halls were covered with photos and posters of Moran, Chadbourne and McLevish, who is still fighting for her life at IU Health Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Inside the gym, a large screen projected photos of Moran and game footage from the Franklin High football team, for which Moran and Chadbourne played.

After the ceremony, the school's football players lined both sides of a hallway leading to the football field where the balloons were released.

Gov. Mike Pence also spoke, assuring classmates and community members that no one would soon forget the brave actions of Moran, Chadbourne and their friends that day.

"We find hope when we see selflessness and courage in our neighbors, in our families and in our friends," Pence said.

"The character and sacrifice that they personified that day will never be forgotten."

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