

Young boy's legacy will be honored with mural, garden

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By Erika Wurst Staff Writer

AURORA -- They say that when one door closes, another opens.

But when Dylan Richardson, 7, was killed in a car crash last July, his family made sure more than just one door opened as little Dylan's closed.

In North Carolina, a 13-year-old girl got a heart; a 15-year-old Illinois boy received Dylan's liver.

Dylan's gifts of life

- A 13-year-old girl from South Carolina received Dylan's heart. She waited 10 months for her transplant, and she is recovering at home.
- A 15-year-old boy from Illinois received Dylan's liver. The transplant was a success, and he is recovering at home.
- A 65-year-old man from Kansas received both of Dylan's kidneys. He had been waiting more than 3 years for a transplant and is now back home with his wife and family.

Classmates and future students at Hall Elementary School received a giant mural in the boy's honor, and the school grounds received an overhaul with money donated to the family after Dylan's passing.

"We are happy and proud to be able to do this in honor of Dylan and his memory with the help of so many," said Dylan's father, Dan.

In his short life, Dylan touched the spirits of many. His family, teachers and friends can still recall his bubbly, go-get-it personality and his love of Junie B. books.

Wednesday evening, they remembered his Guitar Hero skills and his cheeky smile as they gathered in the library at Hall Elementary School to dedicate a mural and garden in memory of the first-grader.

A blue sky, fluffy clouds and Dylan's favorite cartoon characters adorn a wall in the corner where he used to read during school hours.

"I remember him sitting on these exact same stairs pulling books off these shelves," Hall Principal Lisa Polomsky told the audience. Now a portrait and a plaque sit where Dylan used to.

"All who walk in this room will remember Dylan and his love of learning," she said.

On the wall, SpongeBob SquarePants flies through the sky, holding a parachute bearing Dylan's name. A smiling, white bunny hangs from a tree over a bed of flowers that were hand-painted by Dylan's classmates.

Hayden Wilks, 7, was a neighbor and friend of Dylan. Wednesday, he proudly pointed to a bright-yellow flower he painted in honor of his buddy.

"I told all the kids that we (were painting) because we loved Dylan and we want to remember him," said art teacher Jessica Ritchie. "They all just said that they did love Dylan, and they painted very carefully."

Dylan's first-grade teacher, Kathy Cunz, said the library was his favorite place in school. She remembered their private smiles together whenever the boy with a keen sense of humor would pick up on a joke, or the way he shrugged it off when she called him by his older brother's name.

Everyone in the room could share a dozen memories of the child taken too soon, but they also could speak about ways in which Dylan will live on.

He will live on in the lilacs and lilies that will bloom in the spring at Hall School and in the smiles of those he's saved with his organ donation through the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network.

"We're determined to treasure the life that lives on in our memories," said Polomsky ... and in the lives of those Dylan continues to touch.