



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Some eighth-grade students from St. James Catholic Regional School provide a little tender loving care Thursday around the Tai Sy Le Memorial on the northern end of Freeman Lake Park in Elizabethtown. Le was a student at St. James School who died in a car crash in 2018.

TLC

FROM PAGE A1

Eighth-grade students from St. James School gathered Thursday afternoon at the George Searle Pavilion at Freeman Lake Park in Elizabethtown to celebrate having finished their annual presentation of the Passion Play.

At the same time, some of the students helped to clean up around a memorial that had been placed on the Ring Road

end of the park. A couple of benches, a tree and plaque marked an area Tai was accustomed to enjoy.

These students did not know Tai, but were happy to help pitching in to clean around the memorial of a member of the St. James School family.

Foxfire Subdivision is a relatively short walk from the memorial. This is where the Le family resides.

“He was the kind of guy that was friends with everybody,” Helen said. “He always had a smile.”

Tai had a variety of interests. He played sports but was not that much into sports. He didn’t possess that competitive nature.

Tai would rather be outside than most places. He seemed to have an obsession with rocks. In various places inside the Le home, the mantle above the fireplace, a shelf, the dresser in his bedroom, it was common to find a rock.

“Anytime he was outside and he discovered a rock that was really interesting, he would have pockets full,” Wheatley

said. “Tai could not part with them because they were all special.”

The seventh-grader had a favorite ball cap he wore practically everywhere.

“It was his favorite attire, or accessory,” she said.

The memorial near the lake is the very first project his class did together as a way of remembering his friendliness, his infectious smile.

Classmates believed that was the best possible place for a memorial so his parents, when taking a hike around the lake

or walking a trail, would see it there “and it would be a good memory.”

Wheatley says her son doesn’t talk much about Tai, especially around the anniversary of that tragic day. He was the one, however, that worked incredibly hard on the memorial for his friend, to the point of helping to plan it.

“He’s more of a worker than a talker,” Wheatley said.

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JURY

FROM PAGE A1

not guilty, stating that Franks’s death March 2, 2024, in the back of a vehicle he shared with Frescas was an accident.

“There’s a tremendous amount of evidence in this case that is undisputed. Unlike a lot of other trials where there’s disagreement between the prosecution and the defense, there’s not a whole lot of disagreement here,” Rhodes said. “One of the things that we agree about is that Derrick Franks should be alive.”

Rhodes said it was not a mystery about whether Frescas had a gun.

“Trials happen in phases and we had to wait, but from the first time that you saw this man, we were prepared to tell you what happened,” Rhodes said.

Rhodes asked that the jury follow the law when it came time to deliberate as they considered other charges of second-degree manslaughter or reckless homicide.

“Even if you all are angry, and I expect that you’re all angry, I ask that you follow the law, even if you didn’t like someone,” Rhodes said. “Ultimately, you look like you’re very honorable, outstanding people in society, but some of you may have very different lives and those lives can be distracting from Cruz Frescas.”

Even if the jury doesn’t like the lives that are shown, they are sworn to follow the law, Rhodes said.

“It’s not a mystery about what happened, but it’s also not murder,” Rhodes said. “What we’re supposed to do and what we’re allowed to do is argue to you about applying the law to the evidence you heard.”

Rhodes said that he believes some of the evidence shown was distracting for the jurors.

“DNA evidence showing that perhaps he was there, but he was there,” Rhodes said. “But what you, the jury, need to decide on is what happened in that car.”

Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney Eric Carr argued in his closing statements that Frescas was a liar since the very beginning.

“Cruz Frescas is a runner. He fled away from what he did and he is still running from the truth of what he did,” Carr said. “Flight is an admittance of guilt. Cruz has been trying



Photos by KODEE BRINEGAR/The News-Enterprise

Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney Eric Carr shows pictures of Derrick Franks’ injuries to the jury Thursday during his closing arguments. The jury found Cruz Carlos Frescas guilty of Franks’ murder.



Defense attorney Andrew Rhodes tells the jury at Cruz Carlos Frescas’ murder trial that his client’s actions caused the accidental death of Derrick Franks and asked them for a lesser offense in their verdict. The jury found Frescas guilty of murder.



National Gun Violence Memorial
DERRICK FRANKS

to distance himself from what he did and the consequences of it.”

Carr said that during Frescas’ time on the stand, he seemed emotionless.

“The one thing that I’ve never heard him say is, ‘I’m sorry,’” Carr said. “Excuse after excuse after excuse, there is no apology and we’re supposed to believe that he is broken and that he cared?”

Defense argued that Frescas cared about Franks, but Carr disputes that.

“He took all these steps to try get rid of evidence and to distance himself. Hid at his mom’s, tried to clean the car, and lied about Franks’ whereabouts to Nikki Hammel (Franks girlfriend),” Carr said. “He ran from the police for two and a half hours.”

According to Carr, Frescas couldn’t “pick a lane” of the facts surrounding the shooting either as he fluctuated between it being an accident or self defense.

“There is a reasonable explanation that he wants you to believe. The first thing that he told police when they got him was that he hurt,” Carr said. “He told police that, ‘My legs hurt from running through the woods.’”

When police questioned Frescas, he told them he didn’t know why police were looking for him, Carr said.

“He has been distancing himself from this to the last possible second,” Carr said. “He lied to people about what he did. To believe this is anything less than murder, you have to believe his testimony.”

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The News-Enterprise, file

Kids prepare for a game of Red Light, Green Light at the 2024 Easter egg hunt in Haycraft Park in Elizabethtown.

EGG

FROM PAGE A1

the opportunity to gather and come together and have fun.”

In addition to the 33,000 eggs that will be hunted, Castenir said they’ll also have a DJ, food trucks and inflatables. He said egg-hunting areas will be separated based on age.

“We’ll also have our story walk-through, where we have some live scenes of the Easter story,” Castenir said.

The goal is to help serve the families and help them create fun memories together, Casetnir said.

Abundant Life Church, All Nations Church and Restoration Church are

combining efforts to host an Community Easter Fest from 2 to 6 p.m. at North Hardin High School in Radcliff.

The free first-year event includes more than 30,000 eggs to hunt, food trucks, giveaways, inflatables and a visit from the Easter Bunny.

Another egg hunt, hosted by Recipia Waddell, is from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday at Haycraft Park in Elizabethtown.

“I think about our community with the kids who have single parents and don’t have transportation,” Waddell said. “I also think about the women in the women’s shelter and how they can get around.”

According to Waddell, one thing that separates her event from others

in the area is that she doesn’t have an age requirement in order to hunt.

“I don’t care if someone is 18, they can come out and egg hunt all they want,” Waddell said.

Waddell said she pays for the event out of pocket, but the eggs are being donated by small businesses in the area. She’ll also have games for children to play Saturday.

“It’s very freeing,” Waddell said. “I just want the community together to be able to show the younger generation that it’s not all what everybody makes it out to be negatively.”

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408 Nicholas St., Elizabethtown



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