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Fairport to recall crash victims' lives

Community event is tonight at high school

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Staff Writer

FAIRPORT — Andrew Rafoth is not a student at Fairport High School yet, but he wanted to help.

Andrew, 14, and his friend Ryan Sheridan, 14, stopped by a school art room Tuesday afternoon, picked up paintbrushes and made signs to be displayed at the high school tonight during the 7 o'clock celebration for Hannah Congdon, Bailey Goodman, Meredith McClure, Sara Monnat and Katie Shirley.

The young women, all recent Fairport High graduates, were killed June 26 when the SUV they were traveling in collided with a tractor trailer in Ontario County.

"It really hit us hard. It's our community. It's our neighborhood," said Andrew. "We wanted to show we care."

A parent and other students came by to make signs as well, said art teacher Marcia Steffer, whose hands were spattered with paint. More than 50 signs and banners paying tribute to the teens — now known in the community as the "Angels" — were in both of the art rooms and the hallway.

"Once A Raider ... Always an Angel," read one sign, alluding to the girls and the school's mascot. "Many Hearts, One Family," read another.

Andrew, a rising ninth-grader at Minerva DeLand School, drew a large red heart on a sign and, inside the heart, painted the initials of the five teenagers.

Ryan, who will enter McQuaid Jesuit High School next month, painted "FHS" in red at the top of a sign and underneath wrote "Angels Always in our Prayers."

The two even offered to come by hours before the celebration to help Steffer, a 20-year staff member, and other Fairport High personnel hang the signs.

"That would be awesome," said Steffer to the boys. Later she said, "That is typical Fairport. If somebody knows that something needs to be done, you've got ... people to help."

The celebration is one way to provide a good memory for the class of 2007 to reflect on when they think about their classmates who are no longer with them, said incoming juniors Laura Stokes, 16, and Lexie Hartnett, 16, who also painted signs.

The girls' families are grateful for how much support they've received, said Laura, whether it was bringing dinner by or just being there, even if you didn't quite know what to say. She said her family has known the Goodman family for years.

Everything that has happened since the accident "showed me how close the school was," Laura said.

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Event details

Only Fairport High School students and those with tickets will be admitted to tonight's celebration at the school, 1358 Ayrault Road. Attendees are asked not to arrive at the school before 5:45 for the 7 p.m. event, and are encouraged

to carpool. Shuttle service will be provided beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the east and west parking lots at Center Park, at Ayrault and Turk Hill roads.

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