

Community remembers kind spirit of Luke Roux

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FARMINGTON – Luke Matthew Roux was, by all accounts, a young man of few words who showed leadership, kindness, humility and perseverance in all aspects of life.

The greater Farmington community is mourning the death of 17-year-old Roux. He graduated from Farmington High School just 11 days prior to his death in a two-car accident on Colt Highway near Fienemann Road on June 25 while returning from a baseball game.

In a letter sent to students and their families Superintendent Kathleen C. Greider and High School Principal Scott Hurwitz said they were honored to have known Roux and that their hearts were broken. "His kind and gentle personality throughout school, his perseverance and work ethic on and off the baseball diamond and hockey rink and his outstanding academic achievements will be remembered by the Farmington Public Schools' student body, faculty, staff, and administra-



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Luke Roux at the 2022 Farmington High School graduation.

tion. Luke's spirit of giving back to his community for a greater good and consistently stepping up as a leader, especially during challenging times, will remain with us."

A web page was created to share Luke's story and to support the community. It describes him as an "athlete: ice hockey, baseball, tennis, swimming, and, his latest passion, disc golf. Luke was a gamer and participated in e-sports events. Luke was a lover of music and a musician."

It also talked about Roux's strong Christian faith, his passion for helping others and tried to put into words what his loss means. "Luke was prepared and fully equipped to continue spreading his love and kindness beyond his family, friends, and the Farmington community before his life was cut short." Roux was planning on attending UCONN in the fall.

At a July 7 Memorial Service at Bethany Lutheran Church in West Hartford attendees heard about #16's action in the sports realm; Luke's drumming and guitar skills; the way he quietly solved ongoing sensory issues; his simple, yet effective way of rotating through pre-selected outfits; love of chicken fingers, and mom's quesadillas; his methodical way of displaying and drinking chocolate milk; his many nicknames – some of which were gaming screen names – like Cotton Top, Laid Back Luke, the professor and SnoCoke; his love of both progressive metal and NPR; and, of course, his "government mandated" bedtime of 10 p.m.

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Aaron Jainchill, a neighbor, friend and baseball coach to Luke, spoke of the boy's friendship with his own son and Luke's effective leadership skills despite never seeking the spotlight.

Luke was solid on the baseball diamond – particularly as a third baseman. As a hockey defenseman, he had the uncanny ability to come up with the puck and casually - with typical mathematical precision – toss it over opponent's sticks to the tape of a teammate's stick. Luke was a long-time member of the West Hartford Wolves, including the 2018-19 Bantam State Championship team, and was once even the subject of a local Little League draft controversy.

But more importantly, speakers said, Luke carried himself with a quiet respect, did what was asked of him and made sure to never hurt others in any sense of the word.

"Luke, the teammate, was a leader by example, quiet in words but not in actions. Luke would show you what he could do on the baseball diamond," Jainchill said. "He was, as the saying goes, the personification of the axiom that 'actions speak louder than words.'"

Dev Patel talked of getting to know Luke for the past three years as part of his gaming community, particularly through the LSFC Overwatch team. It was in that sphere that Luke was known as SnoCoke, adapted from a somewhat obscure Star Wars meme.

Patel told how Luke was reliable, dependable – always playing or explaining when he couldn't make it – and gave everything he had.

"The only way I can describe how he played was electric. Everyone else on the team and I trusted him because we knew Luke was the type of person who would not give us anything but his best."

But once again, it was Luke's quiet leadership and friendship – without fanfare – that most helped others.

"He would cheer you on while you succeeded and pull you up when you were down," Patel said. "He exemplified what it meant to be a captain."

Patel said he was looking forward to seeing just how much Luke would accomplish in the next four years.

"Although those days won't come, I can cherish the days I did have with him and when I eventually move on from this world, I can tell him about all the lives that he changed and how loved he was. He touched the hearts of so many people in such a short time."

The Rev. Jason E. Reitz, Sr. Pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, read some words penned by Luke's dad, Stephen.

He wrote of his son's nicknames, strong faith, focus, ways of keeping life – and daily dressing – as simple as possible, his work ethic, methodical way of finishing homework and tact discipline in taking care of himself – so he could help others.

"Luke was known for his actions, his words, his defense of anyone who was being spoken about in a less than positive light. If he felt someone was not getting fairly represented he would speak up," his father wrote.

"Luke was a great companion. He was the perfect companion for anyone. He listened, he empathized, did not judge and of course,

saw the best in everything and everyone. (The) Next time someone comes to you, listen longer than you think you need to before talking."

The words were not without the pain of loss.

"Carri (Luke's mother) said it best, 'now I am constantly thirsty as I cannot drink enough water to replenish all the tears I have shed,'" his father wrote. "I hear his footsteps day and night. I hear music in the house as if Luke is in the basement playing rock band. It's just the air vents so I know I've not totally lost my mind. My brain and my heart are desperately trying to fill in the blanks, fill in the silence. We painfully miss Luke but reflect in the happiness of those final weeks – so well represented in his smile in his graduation picture."

"He was so happy when he left the field on that Saturday. I know when he died he had so much joy and love in his life. That helps a lot in our grieving process. We can't think of anything that could be better – short of having him back here with us right now," he added.

Stephen also talked about how his son wasn't perfect – but gave so much back to his family with character molded by a loving mother, the church family, his coaches, his two brothers and so many others.

"As parents we talk so much about how much we give," Stephen wrote. "I'm here to describe how much we received. As much as we thought we knew what that measurement was, the reality is you just don't know how much it is until you lose your child."

My son kept to himself so much, only had a few close friends, but carried so much love with him and

shared that love in abundance every single day in every single interaction. Obvious? No. Impactful? Yes?

The pain we are feeling in the days after losing him is directly related to the amount of love that emitted from him every single second of every minute of every hour in every day and yet in all of that sorrow and pain there's so much joy for the time we did spend with Luke, a reminder that it's not length of life it's depth of life.... My hope is that you leave here today reflecting on Luke's short time here and how with a short 17 years and very few words, he made such a large impact – a life well lived."

Reitz shared words of

faith, personal stories and also encourage others to live more like Luke.

"I know that every time Luke encouraged, helped, loved you, he didn't first stop and say huh, I wonder 'what Jesus would want me to do right now?' – but that's what drove him to do these things," Reitz said. "I say that because that's what faith does. That's what Jesus did. He looked for the lost. He grabbed ahold of the lonely, built up those who were down and discouraged. He cared for others' needs. He stood up for those who couldn't stand up for themselves not for himself but for Luke, for you and for me. ..."

He later added, "Do you want to remember

Luke? Do you want to honor his memory? Then love like Luke loved, care the way that Luke cared, defend the way that Luke defended – all of it a reflection of Jesus and his love and care for you."

Roux's parents and brothers Nathan and Edison have established a memorial fund to support future graduates of Farmington High School, Farmington Valley Generals Hockey, Farmington Little League, West Hartford Youth Hockey, disc golf in Connecticut. Autism awareness and support organizations committed to the awareness and prevention of destructive driving.

See more and donate at <https://lukerouxmemorialfund.com/>



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