

School, family grieve loss of 8-year-old who touched many lives

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WANTAGE — Tuesday was the last day of classes at the Clifton E. Lawrence School, and while there was giddy excitement aplenty, a palpable sense of grief also remained as students and teachers alike continued mourning the passing of a child who, by all accounts, touched the lives of nearly everyone who knew her.

Nearly a month has gone by since Faith Moor, 8, passed away May 20 from complications of an illness she contracted in March. Born with Down syndrome, Faith had struggled until this year to express herself verbally. Still, according to special education teacher Jessica Musilli, who was Faith's teacher for the last three years, it didn't keep Faith from finding a way into the hearts of just about everyone at the school who came into contact with her.

Faith's father, Joseph Moor, called his little girl "a force of nature."

"Faith was the sort of child who made sure people got what she was about," is how her mother, Susan Moor, put it. "She was going to make them like her and know her and be a part of her life."

Lori Devens, the school secretary, said it was a daily ritual for Faith to come into the office and help her and Debra Gould, the principal's secretary, water the plants in the school office each morning. A willful child, Faith also was known to mispronounce her teacher's name as "Silly" and the name of teacher assistant Nancy Richeda as "Kedda."

"Faith was the sort of child who, when she met you, wouldn't let you forget her," said Musilli.

Each day, according to Richeda, Faith also was known to run to the farthest corner of the playground just as recess was about to end. Faith loved to play outside and didn't want it to be over, and for her, it was worth doing all this even if it resulted in extending the time by just five minutes. According to

her father, Joseph Moor, Faith often would exclaim "No, Daddy," or words to that effect, as she was running toward that corner. Eventually, the name stuck as her classmates began calling it the Dad corner.

"Never underestimate a person's ability based on a diagnosis. She was a very resourceful and creative little girl who knew what she wanted and how to get it," Moor said.

In memory of Faith, a dedication ceremony was held at the school Friday during which a poem written by Faith's sister, Abbey, 14, was read and butterflies were released into the air. In Faith's memory, a tree also was planted at the "Dad corner" that Faith was known to run to, and a bench was placed at the spot as well.

The poem by Abbey read, in part, "I do not think my song will end while flowers, grass, and trees abound with birds and butterflies, for I am one of these."

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Photo by Brittany Soda/New Jersey Herald

Joseph Moor, left, Abbey Moor, 14, center, and teacher Jessica Musilli pose at their bake sale stand in honor of Faith Moor Saturday at Wantage Day in Woodbourne Park. Faith, a student affected by Down syndrome, died May 20.

Faith

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Principal Barbara Cimorelli said Faith loved butterflies, and for the children who loved Faith, saying goodbye to the butterflies was a way of connecting them to Faith and acknowledging their grief.

Though the concepts of life and death are hard for the other children to understand, Richeda said their grief still manifests itself in unexpected ways, as in the case of a girl who cried Tuesday and said "I love Faith" when she saw Faith's picture.

"Her presence in our class and in our lives was so strong, so vibrant, and such a big part of our day," said Musilli. "The reminders of her are everywhere, and we've tried to keep her memory alive through funny anecdotes and pictures and stories so we're not avoiding talking about her."

Joseph Moor said sharing these stories also has been vital in helping him through the grieving process. Shortly after Faith took ill in March, he said, he started posting updates on her condition on Facebook. Eventually, as more and more people kept asking about her, he decided to start a blog where he has since continued posting stories and remembrances of Faith at [\[folly.com\]\(http://www.folly.com\).](http://www.faiths-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

"Faith was not only a gift to us but to everyone else she came across," Moor said. "We were always willing to share her with others in life and also in death."

Though losing their younger sister has been emotionally devastating, Moor said the experience has given his daughters Abbey and Jessica a maturity beyond their years. He said Abbey has told him she wants to be a special education teacher when she grows up.

The entire school community also has been supportive, so much so that while the Moors were spending days on end visiting with Faith in the hospital, several staff members from the

Clifton E. Lawrence School, including Musilli and Richeda, came to the Moors' home to clean their house and do laundry. Several fundraisers, including one held at Wantage Day last Saturday, also were organized to assist the Moors with some of their considerable expenses.

While they were fortunate to have insurance to cover most of Faith's medical expenses, Susan Moor said the necessity of traveling to and from New York Presbyterian Hospital each day had taken its toll in other ways. After Faith's condition took a turn for the worse, Moor said she was forced to take a leave of absence from work so she could be with Faith each day.

Between the cost of tolls, parking, and gasoline and the loss of income from her job, she estimated her family had taken a hit of between \$15,000 and \$20,000 in the last few months.

Even so, she said, they have not asked anyone for help and remain deeply grateful for the support they have received.

"Her [Faith's] family has been such a source of inspiration and strength," Musilli said. "Being with her family has helped us tremendously."

"From the beginning, the entire school and community were just amazing," Joseph Moor said. "They have been so supportive. We couldn't have asked for any better."