

Honoring the memory of Lauren Astley in Wayland

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A crowd views the new mosaic to honor Lauren Dunne Astley at Wayland High School, Saturday.



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WAYLAND — It was a day to remember Lauren Astley and how she lived, not how she died.

On Saturday, Wayland High School dedicated a mosaic that featured a rising sun over a blue ocean to Astley, who was murdered last year.

"I think today is to say out loud, 'Lauren, we miss you and we won't forget you,'" said Astley's mother, Mary Dunne, to the more than 200 gathered for the unveiling. "It's beautiful and bold, just like Lauren."

Astley, 18, was murdered on July 3, 2011. Her ex-boyfriend, Nathaniel Fujita, is charged with her death, and is currently being held without bail in the Middlesex Jail.

The idea for a memorial came from history teacher David Schmirer, who worked with a group of current students and Astley's closest friends who graduated last year — Hannah Blahut, Ariel Chates, Gen Flynn and Chloe Jacques.

The mosaic was drawn by student Maisie Flynn, was then designed by local artist Joshua Winer. The mosaic is located outside the school near one of the entrances.

"There was a feeling that we wanted to have something tangible here forever at the school to remember Lauren by," said Schmirer.

Yesterday's event brought together many who have not seen each other for awhile. Many greeted each other with hugs and laughs, but many of those same people were seen later dabbing tears from their eyes during the ceremony.

The ceremony featured a performance by the school's a cappella group, the Muses, of which Astley was a member. They sang two songs, including "Shape of You," by Jewell, which was one of Astley's favorite songs.

Although the mosaic was for Astley's memory, it was also for everyone who knew and loved her, Schmirer said.

"We did this for the entire Wayland community," he said. "For the support they gave Malcolm (Astley, Lauren's father), Mary (Dunne) and all of Lauren's friends and loved ones from last summer until now.

"We did this for the past, present and future students so they will always have

a tangible memory of Lauren," he said.

The bright mosaic is a reflection of Astley, Blahut said.

"Students will look at the mural and experience the beauty and color and brightness we experienced with Lauren," she said.

The mosaic, although a beautiful piece of art, also features many little things that were important to Astley, student Sophia Lesser said.



Coral, which much of the mosaic is, was Astley's favorite color. Purple, which is prominent, is the color of Astley's Jeep, she said.

The sun, which has five daisy petals around it, one for Astley and one for each of her four closest friends, represents Daisy, Astley's favorite perfume, friend Katrina Gaddis said. There are also several Starbucks symbols throughout the mosaic because Astley loved Starbucks.

Other symbols of things that Astley loved, including a shark fin, blueberries and musical notes can be found throughout the mosaic, she said.

Principal Patrick Tutwiler said he is happy with how the memorial came out, because it came from the students' hearts.

"There are things in there I don't understand, and I'm OK with that, because this was a student initiative," he said. "The event itself was tragic and horrendous. Kids are resilient and our focus was to help them be happy and have a good year."

Malcolm Astley, speaking to those gathered, said he hopes his daughter's death can help to get help to those who need it to stop the "significant problem of violence against women."

Looking at the mosaic, Astley said it sparkled as his daughter sparkled.

The mosaic will help "keep her passion, her spirit, to keep inspiring. Keep on sparkling, Lauren, and all of you, in your own way, KOS (keep on sparkling)," Astley said.

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