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The Chicago Maroon

Community mourns death of Lab Schools senior

Senior Faith Fufang Dremmer, 17, was killed last week while on a bike trip in downstate Illinois.

by [Ella Christoph](#) - Apr 2, 2010 7:24 am CDT



Photo: Stuart-Rodgers photography

Lab Schools senior Faith Dremmer, 17, was killed in a bike crash in southern Indiana last week.

Senior Faith Fufang Dremmer, 17, was killed last week while on a bike trip in downstate Illinois. A funeral service was held at Dremmer's synagogue on Sunday and a memorial service organized by the Lab Schools was held Wednesday in Rockefeller Chapel.

At the memorial service, students and teachers who knew Dremmer spoke about her generosity, selflessness, and talent. Students were invited to share a memory at an emotional memorial service.

Dremmer was killed on March 24, when she and two classmates were hit by a minivan on a rural road 320 miles south of Chicago. According to state police, the driver, John Hillyard, 86, may have passed out or fallen asleep. He was cited for improper lane usage but does not face criminal charges.

Dremmer's Lab Schools friends, Julia Baird and Kaia Tammen, both 18, were seriously injured, and Baird remains in critical condition. The three friends had spent weeks planning their spring break trip through southern Illinois.

At the funeral service, which was attended by about 1,300 mourners and conducted by Rabbi Aaron Petuchowski at Temple Shalom in Chicago, Petuchowski read from Dremmer's college essays, which described the close bond between Dremmer and her mother Michele. Michele adopted Faith from a Chinese orphanage at the age of two and raised her as a single parent.

In her essays, Faith described her mother's love and dedication. "That is what drives me. You ask me who my mother is, and I say Michele Dremmer. She is my mother and will always be," she wrote.

While Dremmer had not chosen a college to attend, she knew she wanted to study math and science, and at the Lab Schools, she was an active member of the math and science clubs. She also played on the soccer and tennis teams.

Dremmer also spent much of her time volunteering, including as a Peer Leader on community service for younger Lab School students. She held a bake sale for a Lab School employee to raise money after the worker had lost a child and was struggling to cover the funeral expenses.

"It set off chains of reaction of people feeling good just by being in her presence," said Patty Kovacs, her adviser at the Lab Schools. Kovacs first met Dremmer in her junior year, and said she was one of the most selfless people she had ever met. "This was one of those young people that you really hope your kids [will grow up] to be like."

The memorial service was organized by Lab Schools students with help from teachers and administrators, Kovacs said. Thoughtful ways of remembering Dremmer's memory permeated the event – the students requested that everyone wear bright colors, because Dremmer had always worn bright scarves and accessories.

Students shared a slideshow they had made with photos of Dremmer and played her favorite songs in the background. The mix ranged from world music to the soundtrack of the television show Glee, one of Dremmer's favorites.

At the end of the service, attendees were given a tea bag as a reminder of Dremmer and her love for tea, which she kept stored in her locker. "If you knew Faith, you always saw her with a cup of tea," Kovacs said.

Lab Schools director David Magill sent out an e-mail shortly after Faith's death offering his condolences to the Lab Schools community and providing information on therapy and counseling services that would be available at the school during the week.

"This is a heartbreaking loss for the families, and for the entire Lab community," Magill said in a separate statement. "We are all grieving right now, and this loss will be felt for some time to come."

Kovacs said the memorial service was a celebration of Dremmer's life, in the spirit of a favorite Dr. Seuss quote of hers: "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

At the end of the service, students gave a scrapbook they had made with photos of Dremmer to her mother, and invited attendees to write on notecards that would be given to her as well.

There was "a real sense of community galvanizing to remember, a celebration of Faith," Kovacs said.