

Gem of hope

St. Frederick students
create pearl necklaces
to benefit Water for
Life and to honor the
memory of Trey Altick



Courtesy photo

St. Frederick student Natalie Domingue models one of the freshwater pearl necklaces made for Water for Life.

By Liz Craft

Special to The News-Star

The often not-so-nimble fingers of the adolescent boys and girls adeptly fed the elastic string through the tiny holes of the pearls.

Bead by bead, they concentrated ferociously, complete with furrowed brows and jutting tongues.

They were on a mission.

What these St. Frederick junior high students were accomplishing was the construction of unique freshwater pearl necklaces to benefit Water for Life, a charity of the Trey Altick Foundation.

Trey died at age 15 as a result of a personal watercraft accident on Bayou DeSiard in Monroe. Trey was the son of Jay and Helena Altick of Monroe. The Foundation benefits seven charities including Water for Life.

The necklaces are the brainchild of the Altick daughters, Frances, 16, Hannah, 13, and Abi, 11.

"Before his death, the girls wanted to make necklaces to benefit the Parkinson Foundation (Trey's grandfather suffers from this disease)," said their mother, Helena. Trey also did work with Water for Life when he attended Grace Episcopal.

After the accident, the sisters came up with the idea of selling the necklaces for their brother's foundation.

They wanted to use the venue of the recent Trey Altick

TO ORDER

Contact the Altick Foundation at <http://treyaltickfoundation.com/>

Memorial baseball tournament to sell their creations.

St. Frederick students and friends of the Altick girls — Lily Ryan, Emery Miller and Reagan LaPietra — joined the cause.

Lily pitched making the necklaces to her religion teacher, Brenda Carso, to fulfill the students' community service obligation.

Helena Altick provided the materials, and the students provided the labor.

Students were able to make about 300 necklaces during just two religion class periods, and enough have been sold in just one week to build a freshwater well in a developing country, which is the mission of Water for Life. A well costs \$4,800. The necklaces sell for \$20, and word-of-mouth is the main marketing method.

"If it had not been for the students, we couldn't have done it," Helena Altick said. "It's just like a miracle."

See PEARL 6D



Arely D. Castillo/The News-Star

The Trey Altick Foundation has been established to raise money to build freshwater wells in developing countries. Behind the project are Trey's family, back, Allison Lee, Helena Altick, Jay Altick and, front, Abi Altick, Frances Altick and Hannah Altick. Trey was 15 when he died as the result of an accident on a personal watercraft on Bayou DeSiard in 2008.

PEARL

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Carso said they worked with a purpose. "They wanted them to be perfect," she said.

"First of all, you could see in their little faces that (the work) was heartfelt," Carso said. "They felt they were doing something on behalf of someone who meant something to them.

"Nobody said at any point, 'I can't do this.' They were focused."

Even the boys helped.

"They bought into it completely, even though it was jewelry," Carso said.

Lily Ryan, 13, said her classmates worked really hard during those two days. "We were kinda having a friendly contest to see who could make the most."

Steele Boudreaux, 13, made nearly a dozen necklaces in two days.

"I've never made a necklace before," he admitted. "It was challenging at first, but then I

got the hang of it and it got easier and easier."

The pearls are placed on an elastic string that fits over the head. Helena Altick said she prays over each one.

"My biggest fear is that they won't hold up," she said, "and won't esteem Trey's name."

She also prays for everyone who will wear one or even cast their eyes upon one.

"It's just in my heart that God will make something good out of something that was so tragic to us," she said.

She thinks this is what Trey would want as well.

"I know Trey is smiling. I know he is saying, 'Don't let (my death) be for a waste,'" she said.

"I pray every day that God gives me strength. I know what I have to look forward to when I see him again. I want Trey to say thank you for not wasting this tragedy."

Helena said the family and friends will continue to make necklaces "as long as people want them. I'll do my best."

ABOUT THE PROJECT

From the Trey Altick Foundation Web site

"Water for Life is an organization that has been drilling wells for clean water in third world countries for more than 10 years. In the past 10 years, a staggering amount of clean water has been produced through the drilling of freshwater wells. With more than 2,500 wells now in use, each serving an average of 1,000 people, the estimated number of changed lives reaches 2.5 million."

About the necklace

The origin of the pearl begins as an irritant of foreign body unwanted by the oyster. In an attempt to rid itself of the irritant, the oyster begins a process of layering of substances that will wall off the foreign body. As the oyster does this, an amazing transformation occurs. During a process that takes an average of four years, the oyster transforms this ugly foreign body into a precious gem that is highly sought after and desired.

This is our family's desire for Trey's foundation. We hope to take the tragedy of his loss of life and wrap it in layers of love presenting it back to the world as a gem of hope to those in need.

We have chosen the freshwater pearl in particular because we will give any proceeds raised by the sales of



these pieces of jewelry to bring fresh water to communities in Third World countries who do not have access to clean drinking water. Five million die annually because of a lack of clean water ... 1.5 million of those are children are younger than age of 5.

Our hope is to bring good to others through our tragedy. Although Trey lost his life by an accident on the water, we intend to give life to others by providing them with a clean supply of "fresh water."

Matthew 10:42 (Jesus speaking)

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."