

Brunswick Middle School student dies; community shows support

By **ESTHER FRANCES**
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Kayla Sexton said her 13-year-old son Jack, who died on Tuesday, "was one in a million."

"We always said that he could make friends in a graveyard," she said. "He was just so sweet."

Jack, a Brunswick Middle School student and football player, had epilepsy and experienced a seizure on Tuesday morning, his family said.

Additionally, his family said that the Brunswick, Catoctin, Emmitsburg and Mount Airy communities stepped in to help with catering, sell custom T-shirts with Jack's name and number, which is 77, and donate to the family's GoFundMe page.

As of Friday, more than \$29,000 had been raised.

The Brunswick High School football team on Friday was scheduled to honor Jack before the school's homecoming game.

On Tuesday, a Frederick County Public Schools alert was sent out over email. The alert includ-



Photo courtesy of Ashlie Hitchcock

Jack Sexton

ed a message from Everett Warren, the principal of Brunswick Middle School.

Warren wrote that he was informing the community "with great sadness" of Jack's death, and support was available for students and staff members who wanted to "process their feelings of loss."

Eric Louérs-Phillips, the associate superintendent of public affairs for FCPS, wrote in an email that "we are deeply saddened by the loss of one of our students," and that "our thoughts are with the student's family and friends during this difficult time."

Kayla said in an interview that her heart is full after the outpouring of community support, and that "I wouldn't have anything for him without them."

"It's just a blessing, and I really appreciate them all and everything that everyone's done for him already," she said.

Ashlie Hitchcock, Jack's aunt, said in an interview that Jack's immediate family and godmother all helped raise him.

"He loved everyone. He was a gentle giant," she said. "He was 6'6" in eighth grade, and he was everyone's friend."

She said Jack was especially close with his cousin Paislee, 10, who is Hitchcock's daughter.

Hitchcock said Jack, who had a love for trains, would drive toy

trains on her stomach when she was pregnant with Paislee a decade ago. She said Paislee would give the train a kick.

"Literally since she was born and a baby, they have been best friends," she said of Paislee and Jack's bond. "His first day of kindergarten, his mom and I went to go pick him up with Paislee. We have a photo of him running down the hill with his arms wide open, running to Paislee on his first day of kindergarten."

In addition to trains, Hitchcock said, Jack was a huge fan of cars, football and basketball. She said even though Jack loved the Washington Commanders, he was knowledgeable about players and teams across the NFL and NBA, and even college football.

"He could tell you the best brand of car to financially buy at 13 years old," she said. "He was just an amazing, amazing kid."

Jack previously attended Emmitsburg Elementary School, where he helped out in the community garden, and he "just loved

to do anything that people included him in," Hitchcock said.

She said this was Jack's first year playing football, and he was "so thankful for the opportunity — for everything that they were teaching him."

Kayla said Jack was struggling with his mental health and behavior for the last year and a half, and "he's totally been different ever since he started football."

"To see that is just so heart-filling because I just was starting to see the old Jack, the happy Jack," she said.

Hitchcock said the Brunswick Junior Railroaders, which is part of the Mountain Valley Youth Football League, played a game against the Catoctin youth football team a couple of weeks ago. This was special for Jack because Emmitsburg Elementary is in the Catoctin feeder, and he played against all of his elementary school friends, she said.

"He was so excited to see these kids. ... He knew he was playing against them, but that didn't matter to him," she said.