

peel blog. Apr. 19-92 MK Afanh, Sonja



The casket bearing teen Sonja Afanh's body is carried from the Lee Funeral Home in Streetsville Thursday. Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Hundreds pay tribute to teen

More than 400 friends and family said goodbye this week to a 15-year-old girl described as a person who brought happiness into people's lives.

Sonja Afanh's sudden death Monday stunned the Meadowvale Secondary School community and the shock registered on every face attending a packed-to-capacity memorial service at Eden United Church Thursday afternoon, following a morning funeral.

A popular student, an avid athlete and "a beautiful person," Afanh "set an example."

Meadowvale teacher and Afanh's gymnastics coach, Jim Harding, said, "She left a strong message. Not so much from what she said but by what she did.

"She was a person who believed in success in everything she did and 'don't be satisfied with less than you can give,'" Harding said.

Afanh strived for success. She worked hard. But she wasn't all work, she liked to play, Harding said before describing a code Sonja

had developed to warn of an approaching teacher — "duck flying at midnight."

Claire Pearson remembered her friend with whom she learned gymnastics routines.

"She kept trying to learn cartwheels on the beam. I can't count the times I spotted her, the times she fell off. Every time she fell off, she got back on. She taught me that every time you fall down you've got to get back up, Person said.

Afanh was in a gymnastics competition at the school last Friday. She came home and began to feel ill. She was taken

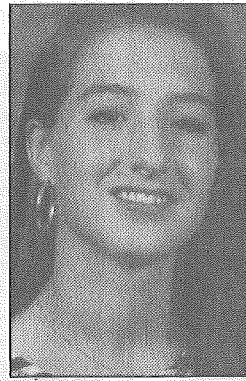
to Credit Valley Hospital and when her condition deteriorated she was transferred to Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto where she died Monday. Though communicable illness has been ruled out, medical officials have yet to determine the cause of death.

Sonja's father Robert said his family is "overwhelmed by the reaction of students who have lost a loved one."

"It shows just how good this community is," he said.

On Tuesday, about 30 students visited the Afanh home to talk, cry, pray and remember.

"Maybe Sonja was an angel from heaven. I can't believe so many people loved her," her father said.



SONJA AFANIH