

Bouquets, Balloons for Yashanee

Murdered teen remembered on her 15th birthday

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Bouquets of red roses and balloons decorated a spot along Northeast Rocky Butte Road Sunday after family, friends and members of the community gathered to remember and celebrate what would have been Yashanee Vaughn's 15th birthday.

The Portland girl's body was discovered on Rocky Butte last June after she went missing four months earlier. Her 16-year-old boyfriend Parrish Bennette Jr. is charged with her murder and is in jail awaiting trial.

"Today is Yashanee's birthday," said her grandmother Reynelda Hayes. "It is important to let her know, and everybody else, she is very much missed and will never be forgotten."

Marsha Hayes, Yashanee's great aunt, circulated a birthday card for loved ones to sign.

"We just don't ever want her memory to die," she said. "She is gone, but we want her legacy to continue forever."

Hayes said she and her family come to visit the site as often as every month.

"Sometimes it is hard to let go," she said. "And sometimes it's okay not to let go. The grieving process never ends, and every year we will celebrate her birthday."



Family, friends and members of the community march along Rocky Butte Road in northeast Portland Sunday to remember and celebrate the life of teenage murder victim Yashanee Vaughn on what would have been her 15th birthday.

PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Taja' Mar Hepburn, 14, said he met Yashanee through a friend, and then found out later they were cousins.

"She was funny and had a good sense of humor," he said. "She had a very exuberant and creative personality, and to me, she was generous to the people she was close with."

The girl's mother Shaquita Louis wore a shirt with an image of her

daughter's face smiling upon it.

"I'm still sad because there are still unanswered questions," said Louis.

She added, however, her gratitude for the number of people who gathered at the butte to walk to-

gether up the hill to the site where Vaughn's body was found.

"They still remember Yashanee, and they still love her," said Louis, thankful for all the support she has received.

Addressing the community, she

said, "Thank you for still supporting our family and still riding the rollercoaster with us. It has been a hard ride."

For Yashanee Vaughn family updates and information on the upcoming trial, visit yashanee.com.

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