

# City & Region

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Ben Sauer's twin brother Jack gives a video eulogy during the memorial service. Mark Mulville/Buffalo News

## **Somber, joyous mourners celebrate the short life of Ben Sauer**

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Published: May 17, 2014, 09:44 AM

Updated: May 17, 2014, 08:36 PM

A life doesn't need to be long to be full of meaning. That was the message of the service held Saturday in Getzville to mark the passing of Benjamin David Sauer, the Clarence boy who died last week at age 5 from a brain tumor that is rare in children.

The service was called a "celebration," and it was partly that.

It also was a chance for friends, family – as well as those who had never met the Sauer family, other than

through his mother Mindy's blog and news media – to mourn the passing of a lively, gentle boy who up until January was like most other kids his age: healthy.

“It's a mother's pain,” Patricia Castillo of Niagara Falls said of what brought her to the service. “It's just heartbreaking.”

“She shared with everyone,” said Castillo, who attended the service with her husband, Baltazar. “We owe it to her to support her.”

The service drew hundreds to the Chapel at CrossPoint for a multimedia event that included video segments, a eulogy by a member of the Sauer family and excerpts from Mindy Sauer's blog (<http://www.blue4ben.com/blog.html>), covering the three-month span from Ben's diagnosis with stage 4 glioblastoma in February to his death Tuesday night.

There was laughter.

“He wasn't afraid of bears,” said Jack Sauer, Ben's twin brother, in a taped video segment that drew laughs from the assembled crowd.

Of Jesus, Jack said this of his brother: “He was his favorite man.”

But there were sad moments, too.

Photos of Ben were flashed on large video screens before and during the event, and some of the homespun snapshots drew chuckles and sighs from the crowd, which filled a good portion of the 2,400-seat hall.

Ben wearing an Old Navy shirt.

Ben riding in a toy car.

Ben reading a book.

Ben in a winter hat, with tassles and googly eyes.

During an address to the assembly, Jerry Gillis, the lead pastor at the Chapel, told mourners that Ben is not gone, but living a new life.

“It seems so final,” Gillis said, “but it's not.”

Ben's diagnosis with the aggressive cancer led to an outpouring of support across the region and then across the nation, in a phenomenon called “Blue4Ben.”

Lights were turned blue and people wore blue in an effort to raise awareness about his illness. On Saturday, some businesses around the Chapel sported signs bearing the message.

Mourners who attended the service – ranging in age from small kids to senior citizens – said they did so to show support to the Sauer family.

Many more people watched the service online.

Denise Goller of Kenmore brought her 10-year-old son Owen to the service.

“I just thought he should see how a community comes together for someone,” Goller said. “It’s so important.”

Nanette Pohle of Williamsville said as a mother she feels for the Sauer family.

“It’s hard to see a child not with you,” she said.

Wilma Roth of Batavia said she saw joy in the day. “It’s a celebration,” she said.

Caryl Terragnoli of Snyder said she was inspired by the Sauer family.

“The bravery of his parents was incredible,” she said. “I look up to them.”

During the service, Gillis told the crowd at one point that the Sauer family – which includes parents Andy and Mindy, who is expecting a baby, and children Jack and Megan – offers a lesson to others.

“I thank you for the legacy of faith in this family,” he prayed, during the service. “We know that his life has ongoing purpose.”

“This is only the beginning of that.”

Dan Albrect, a member of Ben’s family, delivered a eulogy during the service that was written by Ben’s grandfather.

“Ben was a goofy one. He loved being silly,” Albrect said. “He loved to see you laugh.”

The eulogy noted that Ben was picky about how his blanket was arranged and that he would yell “Twin Power!” when playing with his siblings and parents.

“He loved his siblings,” Albrect said.

In the eulogy, Albrect said that Jesus was on Earth for 33 years to change the world.

“It took Ben five years to change ours,” Albrect said.

Mindy Sauer’s blog about Ben can be found at [www.blue4ben.com](http://www.blue4ben.com) ([www.blue4ben.com](http://www.blue4ben.com)). email:  
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