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18 Fore Life & DPR Honors Gaige Willems

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*Article by
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Dexter, Missouri - The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes the word ‘community’ as a unified body of individuals. As a unified body, it seems as if we share the same struggles, victories, heartaches, and triumphs throughout our daily routines. People come and go and the community may have its ups and downs, but in the end, we’re still ‘a unified body’.

This is a perfect way to describe Gaige Willems. Gaige is the son of Misti and Gerald Willems and is a fourth grader that attends Dexter Elementary. He is bright and athletic and loves to play basketball.

In 2009, another heartache shook Dexter and the Willems family when they discovered that their son was diagnosed with leukemia. With many prayers, Gaige recovered but we are very sorry to say that the leukemia has recently returned and Gaige must take further treatments.

Gaige has been playing basketball at the Dexter Park and Recreation and that is why when his family, friends, and teammates found out about his recent news, they knew that something needed to be done.

On Tuesday, December 4th, Gaige played his last game for the season with his team at the

new DPR building in Dexter. It was a bittersweet moment that was heartfelt and hopeful.



Jamie Rowe of Dexter Park and Recreation organized the event in

honor of Gaige and his family. Rowe took the opportunity of handing Gaige a jersey so that he could visually see the support of his teammates and friends.

The jersey is just another way to show Gaige that we are praying, caring, and thinking about him while he goes through this hard time in his life.



Scott Kruse of the Ben Kruse 18 Fore Life Foundation also made an appearance at this special event. Kruse spoke about real champions in the world. They're not super heroes or NBA all-stars, but they're people like Gaige Willems, who have survived and thrived even though tough and life changing events have been thrown his way. The 18 Fore Life Foundation is able to support and help people during times of need, just like Gaige and his family. The foundation was created to help people and that is why Gaige was honored at this special basketball game.

Although a basketball jersey doesn't seem like much, we believe that Gaige will take it to heart and remember that there are so many people throughout this caring community that will reach out to help during his time of need. So, as a 'unified body', we hope that Gaige and his family come through this hardship stronger and happier than ever as hundreds of prayers are said for Gaige and his health.

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