

School remembers killed students

By Jed Kemsley

Two trees in St Michael's Public School in Mittagong were blessed yesterday in dedication of Ben Mikic and Samantha Roman, two former students of the school.

Ben, who died in an accident in April in Mittagong, and Samantha, who died in a car accident on Picton Road in May last year, were remembered by their families, friends, former teachers and current students of the school.

The two trees - an autumn blaze Japanese maple in memory of Ben, and a flowering cherry in memory of Samantha - were planted recently in a newly established 'prayer garden' in the school grounds, which was made specifically for the dedication.

St Michael's Public School principal, Paul Moroney, spoke to those at the service before the tree blessing.

He said the trees and garden would stand as tribute to the two former school captains - Ben in 2003 and Samantha in 1999.

"Our school motto is 'pray and labour', and the prayer garden is now a symbol of that," Mr Moroney said.

"The trees will remind us of them [Ben and Samantha], who, each as school captains, contributed a lot to St Michael's when they were here.

"I pray ... that we will realise the wonder of life and how we, just as Ben and Samantha did, have the opportunity to touch the lives of others."

Following Mr Moroney's speech, local priest Father Sean Cullen

blessed the two trees, as flowers were laid at the base of each to remember Ben and Samantha.

Ben's mother, Andrea Mikic, said the tree was a "big honour" for her son.

"We were so lucky that Ben blessed us with 15 years of his life," Mrs Mikic said.

"To have this maple tree planted in his memory is a big honour."

Mrs Mikic said the maple tree would grow tall and strong and flower red in autumn, the colour having a special meaning.

"Ben used to wear a bright red racing helmet and it will just be a nice way to remember him," she said.

Samantha's parents, John and Melissa Roman, were also warmed by the dedication.

"It's a very heart warming thing to know that so many people thought Samantha was a special person," Mr Roman said.

"To have this tree here, for Sam, shows that she meant a lot to many people."

President of the St Michael's Public School P & F Association, Chris Merlino, said the 'prayer garden' was the result of a lot of hard work by many people.

"We had the initial thoughts to do the garden back in about May," he said.

"Before the garden, the whole area was just basically a big quarter-acre dust bowl.

"But now thanks to the efforts of local businesses and the P & F, the area has had a wonderful transformation and the garden is just beautiful."



REMEMBERING (above): John and Melissa Roman stand with the flowering cherry remembering their daughter, Samantha. **DEDICATION (above right):** Andrea Mikic and her sons James and Daniel, with the Japanese maple tree in memory of Ben Mikic.

