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Dallas High School senior Marilyn Mizenko describes the loss of both of her parents as Fellowship Church senior pastor Marc Ramirez listens.

Despite heartbreaking obstacles, DHS senior is facing graduation head on

By SARAH HITE
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Marilyn Mizenko has had more difficult life experiences before the age of 18 than many have had in a lifetime.

The teen from Dallas, who is preparing to graduate high school this month and attend college in the fall, has turned losing both of her parents within a

year into a positive experience she wants to spend her life sharing with others.

Mizenko's mother, Ann Lynn, had suffered from depression since Marilyn was in fifth grade, and on May 19, 2010, the mother of three took her own life.

Marilyn's sister and brother, who are 14 and 12 years older than her, respectively, were living thousands of miles away at the time.

Marilyn relied heavily on her father for support while she continued to work hard in school and develop a closer relationship with God through the Fellowship Church on Hildebrandt Road.

"Then, later that year, my dad was suffering from a nagging cough," she said. "We took him to the emergency room and they said it was food poisoning."

After a few more tests, it was

revealed that Marilyn's father, Paul had stage IV esophageal cancer that eventually metastasized into a brain tumor the size of a grapefruit. Chemotherapy helped a little, though Marilyn said her father began to behave very different in early 2011.

"He was confused - he couldn't even write the names of people we had known for years,"

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Club is seeking veterans

By SARAH HITE
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The Student Leadership in Civics group at Dallas High School is looking for a few good men (and women).

The club is getting a military honor roll project off the ground, thanks to help from the Back Mountain Ecumenical Men's Group. The project aims to honor military personnel from the Dallas School District who have earned Gold Stars or Purple Hearts.

Gold Stars are awarded to families of those U.S. military personnel killed in action, and Purple Hearts are given to those individuals who have been killed or wounded while serving on or after April 5, 1917 in the U.S. military.

The names, ranks and dates served of the military servicemen and women will be displayed in the high school.

Club leaders, 18-year-olds Angelina Hoidra and Aaron Weir, have begun the task of searching for those award recipients, but it has been a difficult process.

"There are a few online databases, but the best way to find information is to have the information donated to us," said Weir, of Dallas.

So far, the search has only given the club three or four names, and it can be difficult to verify the information without family members.

"The most important thing is that we don't want to exclude anyone," said Weir, vice president of the club.

He said the project's criteria is limited because the school wanted to keep the amount of those honored to a manageable number.

"We have limited resources, but we still wanted to do something very nice that's respectful and significant to honor the military," said Weir.

Hoidra, of Dallas, said the club was formed three years ago and has five main goals - civics, ser-

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REMEMBERING THE FALLEN



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Ernie Priebe IV, left, and his son Ernie Priebe V, both of Shavertown, enjoy the Dallas Memorial Day Parade. For more parade photos, please turn to page 10.

Where have all the flowers gone at Chapel Lawn?

By SARAH HITE
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REPORT MISSING FLOWERS

Call the Chapel Lawn office at 675-4112 for assistance with missing flowers.

Sandy Cooper has always been taught that placing flowers on a gravesite is a sign of respect and caring for the deceased.

"My mother died when I was 1 year old and my dad used to always take me to the cemetery, and I kept up the tradition," said the Chase resident.

But now Cooper is worried she won't be able to show her respect for family members buried in the Chapel Lawn Memorial Park in Dallas Township, as the flowers she buys for her father-in-law's, mother-in-law's and brother-in-law's graves keep disappearing.

"This has been happening for the last three years," she said. "I'm just wondering if it happens to anyone else."

Cooper often buys ornate arrangements of fresh flowers for the graves in honor of various ho-

lidays. The cemetery, located off State Route 415, has plenty of artificial flowers dotting the 16-acre site, but fresh flowers are not uncommon.

The latest event happened on Mother's Day. Cooper placed a long, rectangular flower box filled with a mix of purple flowers near her mother-in-law's grave in the afternoon on Saturday, May 12 and, by early morning on Monday, May 14, the flowers were gone.

Cemetery policy states flowers are removed from grave sites after 10 days for lawn care purposes.

Leonard, a Chapel Lawn maintenance employee who did not wish to reveal his full name, has begun posting signs warning trespassers of video surveillance in an attempt to prevent more

flowers from being stolen.

He said more people, especially teens, tend to frequent the cemetery during the warmer months, but strong winds or even deer could be the culprit.

Leonard said he hasn't had many complaints about stolen flowers, but wishes to prevent more incidents from occurring.

Cooper was concerned about not placing flowers on her family's graves for Memorial Day - her father-in-law was a former chief of police and her brother-in-law a former assistant fire chief, both in Jackson Township.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," she said. "It breaks my husband's heart, too."

Leonard said once more signs are posted, he'll begin to ask the local police department to patrol the area.



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Sandy Cooper kneels by the graves of her in-laws where flowers were removed soon after placement in Chapel Lawn Memorial Park in Dallas Township.

