

Lewis's life was cut tragically short after she was stabbed while attending a local carnival with her friends in the Philadelphia neighborhood of Tacony. The death of Christa Lewis stunned her family, friends and community.

At the time of her death, Christa Lewis was a sophomore honors student at St. Hubert's Catholic High School who excelled at soccer and lacrosse. Friends described Christa as fun-loving, popular and vivacious. Christa is survived by her parents, Joan and Greg Lewis, as well as two younger brothers, Bud and Evan and her younger sister, Cory.

Her sudden death shocked the close-knit community and shed light on the growing problem of youth violence. We all know how important it is that we address the overwhelming pressures that teenagers face during their developmental years. It is imperative that we do all we can to address violence done to and by teens that can lead to the tragic and untimely death of a young person.

In the aftermath of her murder Christa's entire community rallied around the Lewis family

as well as worked to ensure the safety of area residents. Since her death nearly 10 years ago, many people have worked hard to keep Christa's memory alive. Members of the community organized sports tournaments and local dinners to benefit the Christa Lewis Memorial Fund, a non-profit organization that supports local children and schools. On October 3, 1997, the Historical Society of Tacony also dedicated the Christa Lewis Memorial Arboretum in Disson Park.

On October 15, I joined Christa's family at the unveiling of the seventh series of memorial stones at the Christa Lewis Memorial Arboretum. Christa's father said at the initial dedication of the arboretum that it was to be used by the community—including the Tacony and Mayfair sections of Northeast Philadelphia—to honor and reflect on the memory of their loved ones. It is now filled with stones and trees memorializing friends, family and loved ones from throughout the community.

Although Christa sadly lost her life at such a young age, the park serves as a place of love and remembrance. This past weekend, I was honored to join Christa's family in celebrating her life, spirit and the memory of so many others at the arboretum.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, October 17, 2005, I was unable to be present on the floor to vote on rollcall votes Nos. 521, 522 and 523. If I had been present, on rollcall vote 521 I would have voted "yea," on rollcall vote 522 I would have voted "yea," and on rollcall vote 523 I would have voted "yea."