

Mother of slain teen: 'I know he's OK'

Mourners remember, honor Wadlington

Segann March

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Nearly 150 family members and friends of Jaiwaun Latrell Wadlington gathered Wednesday at Bellemeade Park to sing happy birthday and honor his memory.

The former Harrison High School student would've turned 19 Wednesday. Blue balloons and colorful lanterns lit the sky as his mother, Keeshan McBaine, thanked everyone for celebrating her son's life.



Wadlington

Wadlington was killed Friday while attending a party at Thomason's Banquet Hall in Henderson, Ky. Since his death, the community has raised more than \$3,000 to cover his funeral expenses. Their goal is \$8,000. His funeral is set for Saturday.

McBaine wants people to remember her son. He was the third of her seven children.

"He was just life," she said. "It's unbelievable. My son is actually gone from me. He wants me to be strong for him. I



Lontae Pettie lights a candle to honor slain teen Jaiwaun Latrell Wadlington during a gathering of friends and family at Bellemeade Park for his birthday Wednesday. MACABE BROWN / COURIER & PRESS

know he's OK up there."

Witnesses told the Henderson Police Department the shooting started after the party ended and as attendees were leaving the building.

Friends of Wadlington say he had nothing to do with the shooting and was

always the peacemaker in their group.

His sister Nykia Collins, 20, said she'll miss joking with him and his laugh.

"I'm crushed," Collins said. "That was my little baby and he would go to war for us. I can't believe this happened. We

have to be strong because that's what my brother would want."

On Tuesday, Henderson police charged Japaris Baker, 18, of Henderson, with the murder of Wadlington. Two other Evansville residents, Travon Garrett, 18, and Johnel Henderson, 18 were also shot that night. Both survived.

McBaine said she hopes the younger generation learns from situations like these. Her son's birthday was the day before hers and she'll miss spending it with him.

"If you're not going to learn from this murder ... you'll never learn from anything," she said. "This should be an eye-opener for everybody. I was at the hospital with my daughter when I got the call about him. I couldn't believe it because he liked to joke a lot. This time it wasn't a joke."

Carron Johnson, 17, said he was happy to see so many people come out to honor Wadlington.

"My brother was loved and had good energy," he said. "He was always just smiling at me. I remember him coming to get me just to get me out of the house. I'll miss our trips to Owensboro and buying clothes at the mall."

McBaine created a Go Fund Me fundraiser to raise money for his funeral expenses.

Donations are also being collected at Going Forward Barber Shop, 1015 E. Riverside Drive in Evansville.