



Photo by SHERRY PELLEGRINO

A bench at George Walton Academy was built to honor the memory of Anna Hurdle.

Honoring Anna

Father creates foundation in daughter's name

By **BRIAN ARRINGTON**
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Anna Brooke Hurdle was the kind of girl who would make a new student at George Walton Academy feel welcome.

She would pull the new girl in school into the bathroom, away from the critical eyes of other students, and help fix her make-up or hair to make her fit in better, her friends said.

She would "defend and protect those who could not protect themselves," her father Geoffrey Hurdle said.

"She was your typical 11-year-old, blond-haired, blue-eyed girl," Hurdle said. "She loved all her animals, all of her friends, texting. She was a clarinet player, she loved social networking."

But on Christmas night of last year, Anna suddenly started to feel bad. Her temperature kept spiking to 104 degrees.

The next morning she went to the doctor, who told her family to rush her to the hospital.

Hours later she would be dead.

She died due to a sudden bacterial infection. Her family later learned she had an abnormally small spleen and couldn't fight off the infection.

News of Anna's death spread quickly through GWA.

"It was pretty hard," Hurdle said. "It happened during Christmas break, but the news spread very fast."

Before school let out last semester, GWA officials and students honored Anna with a tree and a memorial bench at a balloon-launch ceremony.

"I can't thank the school enough for that," Hurdle said. "It meant a lot to us. They went over the top."

To honor his daughter's giving spirit, Hurdle has formed the Anna Brooke Hurdle Foundation to create a "safe haven" for children in need — at first targeting the children in Mbabane, Swaziland, Africa. Hurdle, who has visited the county, said there is an alarming amount of sexual abuse in Africa.

The non profit foundation will provide a daily meal, education and medical treatment for the children in need.

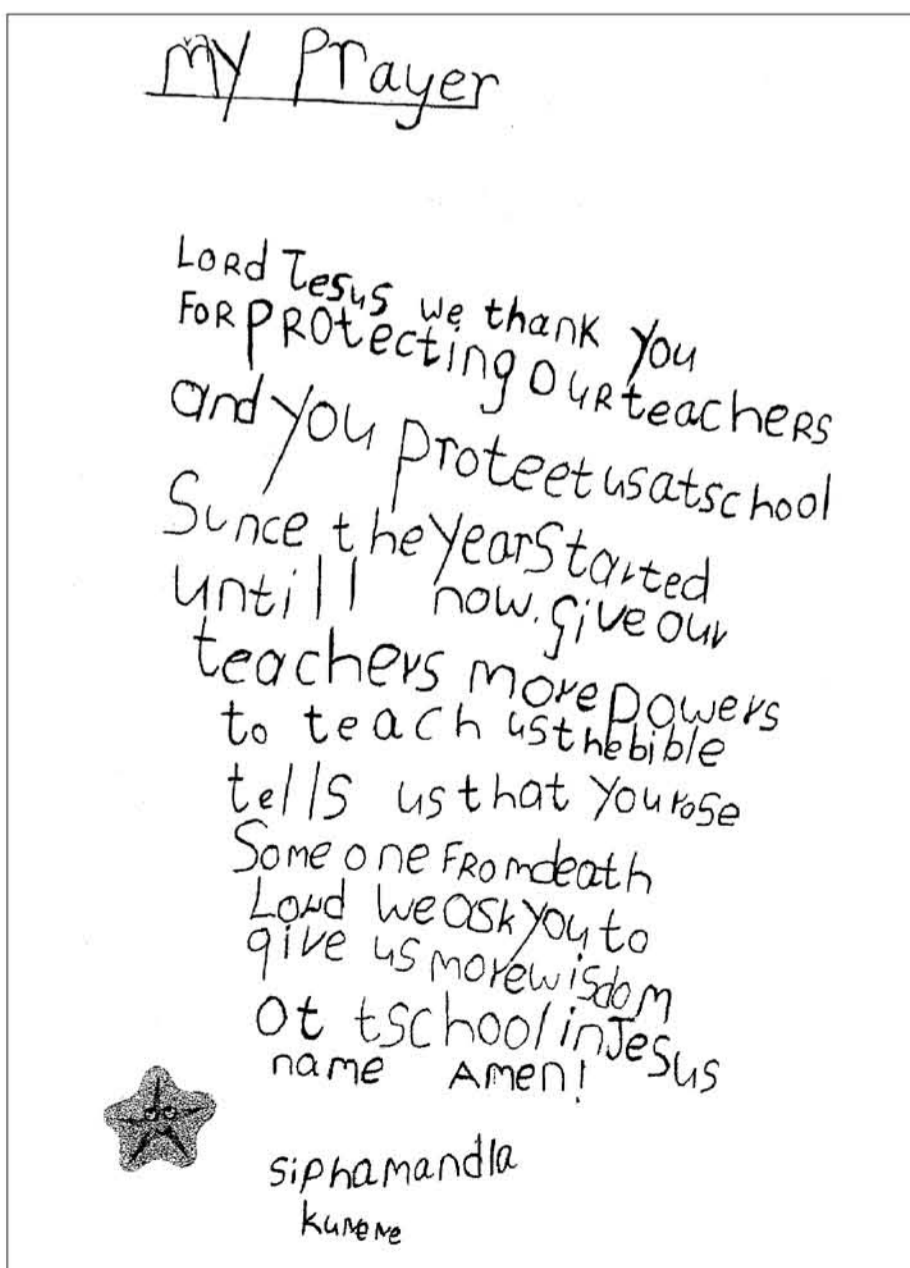
Hurdle said he is also hoping to set up scholarships in his daughter's name for GWA students and at his alma mater Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, N.C.

For more information visit www.annahurdle.org, e-mail Hurdle at g@hurdle.com.



Anna Brooke Hurdle died suddenly of a bacterial infection Dec. 26, 2008 at 11 years old. Her father Geoffrey has created the Anna Brooke Hurdle Foundation to 'protect those who could not protect themselves.'

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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A letter written by an African girl named Siphamandla. It is children like her the Anna Brooke Hurdle Foundation is designed to help.