

# Drowning victim's mother testifies at inquest

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Kyle Debow had learned to swim just a month before he died at a Moncton water park last summer, his mother told an inquest Monday.

Beth Debow sobbed as she described how 12-year-old Kyle, the oldest of her three children, went to the Magic Mountain water park with a friend on Aug. 7.

Along with his friend, the Grade 6 student from nearby Sussex Corner jumped into the wave pool under the watch of a lifeguard but without the direct supervision of a parent or guardian. The two children then became separated in the deep end of the pool.

After the friend went to look for his mother, another child spotted Kyle floating unconscious in the water. The 12-year-old girl told the inquest that she noticed Kyle wasn't moving his arms or legs as he floated in the water, and didn't react when his head and shoulder bumped against the side of the pool.

A lifeguard and an off-duty police officer pulled Kyle from the water and tried to revive him. He was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

A coroner's inquest has set aside four days to hear evidence about the accident and try to answer any lingering questions about what happened. The five-person coroner's jury is also expected to recommend safety measures to ensure similar drownings are avoided in the future.

Nobody knows how long Kyle was floating in the pool before staff pulled him from the water. The boy's family hopes the inquest will provide some answers.

"We may never know exactly what happened," said Beth Debow's uncle, Steven Brown. "At least to know that the proper procedures, CPR and all that were followed, that's basically what we want."

Kyle's death was the first fatality in the history of the water park, which opened in 1987.

General manager Mark Jelley says the experience has traumatized the young lifeguards and other staff at the park, and he's open to any recommendations that come from the inquest.

"With any type of business, there's risks," Jelley said. "We certainly do what we think is consistent with the industry, the province, and we try to be above and beyond our training and lifeguards and practices.

"Certainly if there are things to be learned, we're here for that."

In about 20 minutes of testimony, Debow described Kyle as a loving and helpful son, and said she did not believe he was dead until she was taken to the hospital to identify him.

She said she wanted the inquest to understand how loved her son was by his two younger sisters, one of whom tells



Kyle Debow, 12, drowned at the Magic Mountain water park in Moncton last summer. (CBC)



A lifeguard watches swimmers at the Magic Mountain water park in Moncton, N.B. (CBC)

her mother that she's still waiting for Kyle to come home.

Brown says the family will never get over the loss. "He was a very loving child, very supportive, and very close to his mother and father," he said. "A big part of their lives is lost forever."

The inquest continues Tuesday, with hospital doctors scheduled to testify.