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Silence, prayer mark Miranda anniversary

Neal Ross | Sonoma Valley Sun

The picnic table on which the dying Luis Miranda lay a year ago was strewn with flowers and candles and surrounded by a quiet crowd of nearly 100 people last night at Maxwell Farms Regional Park.

“It is good to be together tonight, and it is hard to be together tonight,” Pam Cummings, pastor of Sonoma United Methodist Church, told the gathering. “As we come to the anniversary of his death, it is good to be together.”

The 17-year-old Boyes Hot Springs resident was shot and killed in the park’s lower soccer fields on Oct. 22, 2007. Awaiting trial in Santa Rosa for murder charges with gang enhancements are suspects Juan Carlos Perez of American Canyon, Javier Ceja of Sonoma, and Juan Calderon of Boyes Hot Springs. Perez and Ceja were both 19, and Calderon 17, when the crime was committed.

A handful of deputies and three police cruisers, including one unmarked unit from the county gang task force, kept a watchful eye on – and a respectful distance from – the hour-long gathering. The mostly Latino attendees, ranging in age from pre-teen to senior citizen, held candles and said the rosary as darkness fell.

Although Cummings and First Congregation Church pastor the Rev. Nancy Taylor invited those present to share memories and stories about Miranda, few did so aloud. Among those who did was Miranda’s father, who spoke softly in Spanish to thank the crowd and talk about the effect of his son’s death.

“You don’t know how destroyed we are inside,” he said. “For us, there is no happiness any more ... I only want to tell him to rest in peace.”