

PREP FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL: Visiting team makes gesture to help Cambria-Friesland heal after Didion explosion

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Pictured are handwritten sympathy cards from members of the Plainfield Tri-County football team delivered to Cambria-Friesland on Friday before the Penguins scrimmaged against the Hilltoppers. The cards were addressed to the community, which is still recovering from the explosion at Didion Milling that killed five workers on May 31.

DAN LARSON/Daily Citizen

CAMBRIA — A few hundred paces from the football field at Cambria-Friesland High School is Didion Milling, where an explosion on May 31 killed five workers and injured a dozen others.

On Friday, a gesture made by some of the football players who scrimmaged in the shadows of where that tragedy took place helped continue the healing process.

Plainfield Tri-County players, in town to practice with Cambria-Friesland, offered handwritten letters of sympathy, some of them including money for relief funds.

“It’s the kind of thing that brings a lump to your throat that they realize that this is beyond high school football,” C-F head coach Jim Bylsma said.

The letters were written Thursday night after practice and addressed to the C-F community as a whole, a gesture Penguins starting quarterback Dawson Knutson said was intended to help the people in C-F “get past the sorrow.”

“When we heard about it we were like, ‘Wow,’” Knutson said. “This is a small community just like ours and when something like that happens to a community, we understand that everyone knows everyone and it affects a lot of the community, not just one particular family.”

C-F co-athletic director Stu Quade said it’s the latest in a number of heartwarming acts of kindness the school and the community has been on the receiving end of since the explosion.

“People are a lot more connected than you think,” he said. “All over, it’s amazing, the kind gestures.”

“Genuine, sincere, kindness,” added C-F’s other co-athletic director, Tyler Lindert.

The move on the part of the Tri-County players also served to show that, yes, high school sports are indeed an extension of the classroom and kids are learning about more than just the game.

“It’s an act of compassion among competitors and you don’t see that much,” Bylsma said. “It’s a great lesson about what high school football teaches.”