Six drowning victims identified

Tuesday, August 3, 2010
Six teen-agers who drowned while swimming in the Red River on Monday have now been identified.

They are siblings Takeitha Warner, 13, JaMarcus Warner, 14, and JaTavious Warner, 17, and brothers Litrelle Stewart, 18, Latevin Stewart, 15, and LaDairus Stewart, 17, all of Shreveport.

Takeitha and JaMarcus were eighth graders at M.J. Moore Math/ Science Academy. Latevin was a sophomore at Woodlawn High School and Litrelle, LaDairus and JaTavious were seniors at Woodlawn.

Caddo Sheriff's deputies say the six were with a large group of family and friends who were at the river near Hamels' Memorial Park for an afternoon of swimming and barbecuing. The group had only been at the river about 10 minutes before tragedy struck.

All six teen-agers and a 15-year-old male cousin of the Warners entered the water and waded out several feet. They were wading back to the sand bar when the 15-year-old, who has not been identified because of his age, stepped off a ledge or drop-off that could not be seen in the murky water. The water depth immediately changed to 25-30 feet.
The 15 year old screamed for help, and the other children went to his location in the deep water, but none could swim. A group of swimmers unrelated to the victims heard their cries and also tried to help. Only the 15 year old who originally stepped off the drop-off could be saved.

The teen-agers were accompanied by several adults who were on the sand bar at the time of the drownings, but none of the adults could swim either. Only one had a life jacket, which was thrown to the victims, but they could not reach it.

Around 6:30 p.m., a 911 call reporting a possible drowning was made to the Shreveport Fire Department, which immediately dispatched divers to the scene. The Caddo Sheriff's Office Marine Unit and Patrol Division also responded as well as the Bossier City Fire Department Dive Team.

Fire Department divers conducted a rescue operation for about 30 minutes before moving to recovery mode. The first body was located at 7:51 p.m. All six victims were recovered by 10:02 p.m. within 20-30 feet of one another.

The area where the drowning occurred is not a designated recreational or swimming area but is often frequented by swimmers and boaters. There are no lifeguards on duty.

The investigation into the drowning is being conducted by the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office.