Day as they called it this year. She was very busy all day so I didn’t see that much of her. The last words she said to me were, ‘See you on Monday!’ meaning the first day of school. That was the last time I heard from her,” wrote Lizzie Swanson, a student at Hand in a letter.

Swanson dedicated a website in memory of Taryn: http://www.geocities.com/PittsburghZoo/6326/taryn.html. She has included a memorial guestbook for anyone wishing to write in and share their memories of Taryn.

Laramie Wilcox, a senior at Hand, said what set Taryn apart from others was “A lot of people generally complain a lot and believe the world is something they can’t change. She had the perspective that the world is what you make it and it doesn’t have to be a bad place.”

Taryn had a deep commitment to the arts. Her ballet took her to Paris for the summer. She spoke fluent French. She also played violin in the Hand orchestra.

“Taryn was one of the most determined people I knew. She loved to play the violin and put all her heart into it — just like she put all her heart into dancing,” said Leah Nollentberger, a student at Hand.

“I think a friend put it best when he said she was always smiling. That was Taryn. If you needed a smile, she was there, along with a hug and a few good words. I hope she holds on to those traits wherever she is, and never lets the music die.”

Swing dancing was one of Taryn’s favorite pastimes. She had gone to a swing dance camp and tried to teach her friend, Pam Kron, to swing.

“I went swing dancing with her and she tried to teach me and I was stepping over her feet,” said Kron.

Taryn liked to swing dance with her father, John T. Datsko. They were part of the Connecticut Swing Dance Society’s monthly dances.

In a Jan. 13 Shore Line Times article on swing, the then 15-year-old Taryn was quoted at a dance with her dad as saying, “I really didn’t know how to dance at all - I didn’t have anybody to practice with. I danced with a lot of older people. It’s fun. It was so much fun … You like smile the whole time.”

Taryn had many male friends but she adored Vin Conti, who is now a sophomore at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Conti grew up in Madison but his parents later moved to Maine.

“We were completely in love with each other,” he said. “We would bike ride together and mentally spar each other. She would teach me about (particle physics), and I would teach her how the Internet worked.”

John Brooks, a U.S. History teacher at Hand, thought Taryn was “something special.”

“In my 32 years of teaching, she was the most special kid I ever knew and her friendship was a gift from God,” he said.