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Guest and survivors gathered following a remembrance and reflection service in Newburgh on Monday. The service was for those who died in the deadliest tornado to hit Indiana in 30 years a year ago Monday, and those in Evansville affected by the storm.

Tearful ceremony marks anniversary of tornado

By RYAN LENZ
Associated Press Writer

NEWBURGH — Fire trucks raised their ladders to touch in an arch above a church doorway Monday night as survivors and volunteers gathered to mourn and remember the two dozen people lost a year ago to a violent tornado.

With red lights flashing, the bridged ladders were a symbol of strength and recovery in the aftermath of a tornado that swept a 41-mile path of destruction on Nov. 6, 2005, program officials said.

But for many of more than 1,000 people at the ceremony, the anniversary of Indiana's deadliest storm in decades was emotionally draining.

"This was going to be a difficult hurdle, whether we were here as a community or home alone," said John Martin, whose 2-year-old son, C.J., was killed in the storm. "This was a way that we could all take the hurdle together."

The tornado struck shortly after midnight, hitting the town of

The tornado scattered fields with shorn homes, and the worst devastation was at Evansville's Eastbrook Mobile Home Park, where 20 people were killed, including Martin's son, mother and grandmother.

But the anniversary ceremony was about more than remembering that tragedy.

It was also about learning to live after the storm.

"For those of you here this evening who lost those loved ones, you can be assured there are many people still praying for you," said Brandi Crawley-Gish, whose home was destroyed in the storm. "We are here tonight to help you carry on."

The program was sponsored by the Remembering November 6th Committee and included slideshows on towering screens timed to music. Photographs of survivors and victims flashed to music as members of the audience wept.

The Rev. Shane O'Neil told sur-

storm.

Debbie Burns, president of the committee, also said the storm's one-year anniversary should mark a time to move forward.

"Don't let that tornado take away any more of you than it already did," said Burns, who volunteered after the storm and has put together a book of pictures and stories about "those who died, those who survived, and those who gave."

"That night you didn't have the power. Today you have the power to say what you will and will not let that tornado continue to do," she said.

Martin, who sang a country song during the ceremony that he dedicated to his mother, said not a day passes that he doesn't think about those he lost in the storm. He often puts a toy car he bought his son in the passenger seat as he drives to help him remember.

"It's been pretty slow, but I'm healing much better now than I was six months ago," Martin said after the ceremony. "Then I was