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# Search for missing toddler continues

The FBI has been called in to assist state and local police and the Maine Warden Service in the search for 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds.

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**WATERVILLE** — Search parties combed a Waterville neighborhood Sunday, but as evening fell they still had not found a found a 20-month-old girl reported missing Saturday morning.

Police have scheduled a press conference at 2 p.m. today.

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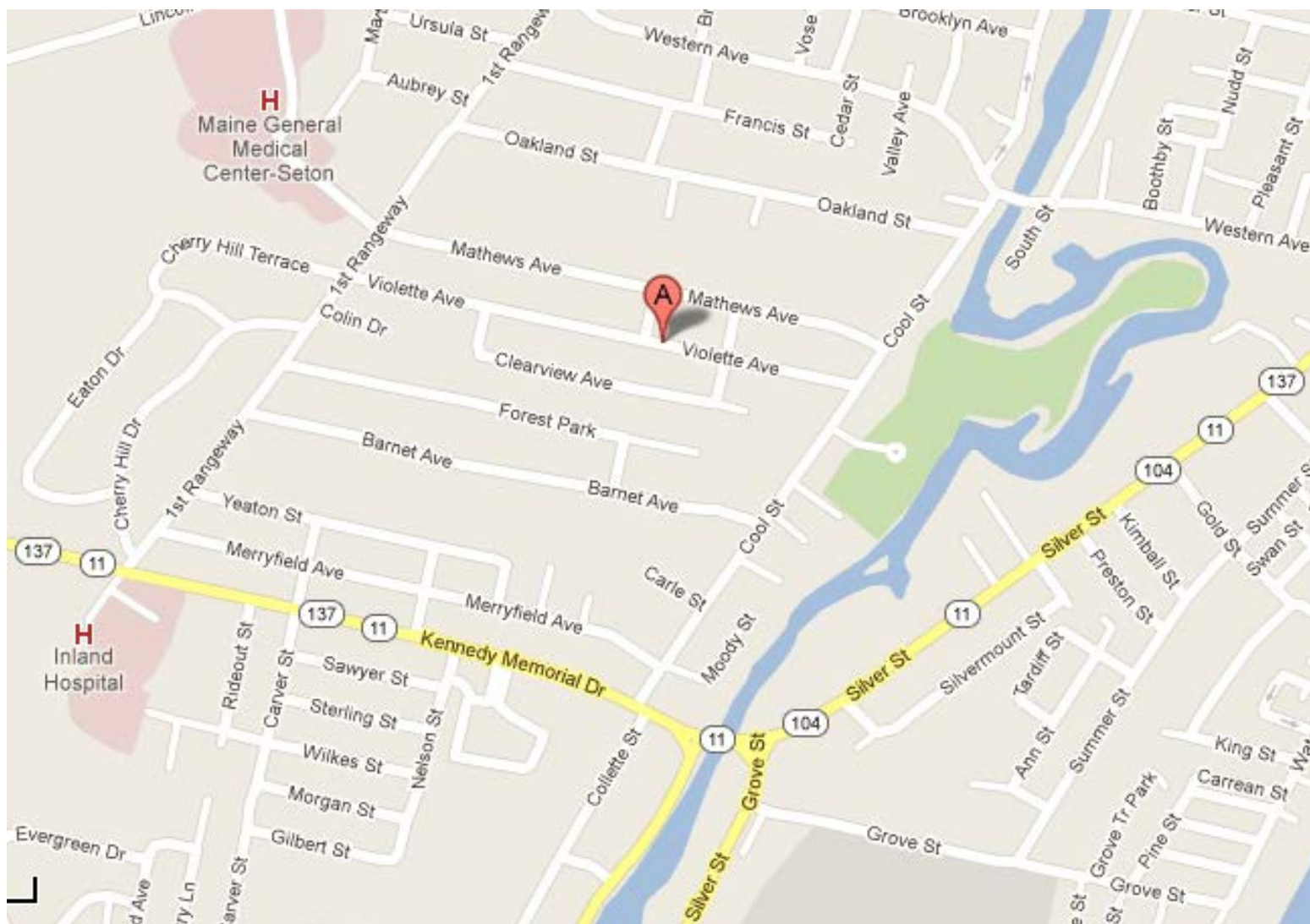
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



**WATER SEARCH:** Searchers in a Maine Warden Service airboat motor on the ice-covered Messalonskee Stream in Waterville on Monday in search of missing 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds. The search area was concentrated below the dam near Western Avenue, a short distance from Reynold's home on Violette Avenue. *Staff photo by David Leaming*



Staff photo by David Leaming COMMAND: Waterville Fire Chief Dave LaFountain, center, direct firefighters before an extensive search Sunday for missing 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds near her home on Violette Avenue in Waterville.



Map showing the location of 29 Violette Ave. in Waterville

Search photos available for purchase: [Photo Store](#) →

Ayla Reynolds, dressed only in pajamas and wearing a soft cast from a broken arm, was last seen sleeping in her bed at 8 p.m. Friday, Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey told reporters at a news conference Sunday afternoon. The FBI has been called in to assist state and local police and the Maine Warden Service in the search.

Two search dogs, one from the Warden Service and one from Maine State Police, were at the house where the toddler lives for much of the day Sunday.

Ayla was reported missing from her Violette Avenue home by her father, Justin DiPietro, about 9 a.m. Saturday, when he found her bed empty. The girl's mother, Trista Reynolds, is living in the Portland area without a permanent address, Massey said. Both parents have been interviewed and are cooperating with the investigation, he said.

Several adults were at the home Friday night when Ayla went to bed. At least one of them was not a family member, he said.

Massey said “everything is on the table,” and abduction has not been ruled out.

“We covered quite a large area up there. Unfortunately we were not successful in finding little Ayla,” he told reporters. “That is our primary focus, to find a 20-month-old little girl who now has been missing at least 40-45 hours and bring her home safely.”

Ayla was last seen wearing green one-piece pajamas with polka dots and the words “Daddy’s Princess” on them. She is 2 feet 9 inches tall, has short, thin blond hair, and weighs approximately 30 pounds. Her left arm is in a sling and soft splint.

Massey would not say if a door had been left open at the house or if there had been any uninvited entries into the house. He said Ayla broke her arm in an accidental fall three weeks ago.

Massey said investigators have interviewed everyone who was in the house that night.

Ayla Reynolds’ mother and maternal grandparents waited in the Portland area Sunday for any news about the girl.

“It’s just so hard for me to sit back and not do anything,” said Ronald Reynolds of Portland, Ayla’s grandfather. “I’m crawling out of my skin right now. She’s the apple of my eye.”

The toddler had lived in Portland with her mother and grandmother until mid-October, said Becca Hanson, Ayla’s grandmother. The grandparents, who are not married and have separate addresses, said Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services had removed Ayla from her mother’s care in October. The maternal grandparents criticized the agency, although no details about the action were available Sunday.

Hanson was staying with Ayla’s mother, Trista Reynolds, in a South Portland motel Sunday as the search continued in Waterville.

“This is the worst thing of all because she doesn’t know where her daughter is at,” Hanson said. “I’m hoping that they call us soon and say they found her.”

Hanson said Trista Reynolds was not able to talk to the media. Trista Reynolds also has a 9-month-old son who is living with her at the South Portland motel, Hanson said.

Ayla’s grandparents described her as a bright, happy girl.

“Ayla started walking when she was 10 months old,” Hanson said. “She’s a really outgoing child. She always had a smile on her face.”

Ayla loves her little brother, Hanson said. “She tries to give him his bottle and his binky. They’re like two peas in a pod.”

Ronald Reynolds, Ayla’s grandfather, said police asked him to stay in Portland rather than go to Waterville and try to help. He said he hasn’t been able to eat or sleep since police came to his home with the news Saturday.

“She is so friendly, loveable, smart,” he said. “I don’t know where she is. I don’t know if she’s in a car, if she’s in a gutter somewhere. ... I want my granddaughter found. I want her home safe.”

Massey said a search for the child began early Saturday and continued Sunday with firefighters from Winslow and Waterville going house to house in Ayla’s neighborhood. Game wardens also searched the banks of nearby Messalonskee Stream.

“We’ve got detectives out there; we called in the Warden Service, state police and the FBI, who bring unique resources that the Waterville Police Department does not have,” Massey said. “Again, the goal is to find Ayla – to do that, I want to make sure that I utilize every possible resource that I can to find the child and get her back safely.”

Massey said the report of the missing child did not qualify as an Amber Alert for several reasons.

“You lose the advantages of an Amber Alert if you don’t get it out immediately,” Massey said. “We didn’t get this information until 10 hours later.

“Some of the (Amber Alert) criteria is that you have to have a suspect and you have to have a vehicle. In this particular case, we had none of that criteria. It was a missing child.”

Massey said the Waterville Police Department did use an established automated telephone calling system, which calls everybody within a square mile and alerts them that there is a child missing, what the child looks like and where to report any information back to the police.

Massey would not discuss why the mother was in the Portland area without a fixed address or why the child was staying with her father in Waterville. He said he was uncertain whether there are any child custody provisions in place.

Among the many people who volunteered to search for the girl was Andrea Donadio of nearby Cool Street in Waterville.

“I knew if I had children, I would want anybody in the community to help me find my child,” she said. “We went on foot to the river behind my house; out by Moody Street all the way down to Calvary Temple and by the big dam.”

Others, including Ashley Church of Norridgewock and Amanda Doody of Fairfield, said they were horrified to see the postings of the missing child on Facebook.

Church, 26, said she had two little girls of her own at home. Doody, 29, said she has two little boys.

They said they could not just sit around and not do something to help.

“I would be devastated if nobody came out to help me look for my kids,” Doody said. “It’s almost Christmas; it’s just scary to think that we live in Maine and it’s happening here.”

Anyone with information regarding Ayla’s whereabouts is asked to call the Waterville Police Department at 680-4700.

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