

 Posted December 20, 2011

# Police seize cars from Violette Ave home

WATERVILLE -- A sport utility vehicle belonging to Ayla Reynolds' father and another car were seized by police Monday at the Violette Avenue home of missing 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds as the investigation into her disappearance entered its third day.

BY [DOUG HARLOW](#) STAFF WRITER



Share      Comment

WATERVILLE — A sport utility vehicle belonging to Ayla Reynolds' father and another car were seized by police Monday at the Violette Avenue home of missing 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds as the investigation into her disappearance entered its third day.

Police, who have said it's possible the toddler was abducted, said Monday that no one has been arrested in connection with the case.

---

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



Staff photo by David Leaming **LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE:** Maine State Police Detective Scott Bryant watches as a tow truck operator hooks on to the first of two vehicles that were taken from a home at 29 Violette Ave. in Waterville on Monday. The home has been subject to an intense investigation for 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds who has been missing since last Friday. The girl and her father Justin DiPietro live at the home. *ALL*



Staff photo by David Leaming **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 Ave., a short distance from Reynolds's home on Violette Ave. ALL





This undated photo obtained from a facebook page shows missing toddler Alya Reynolds. Police in Maine are appealing to the public for help in locating the 20-month-old girl who was last seen Friday night. Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey held a news conference this afternoon to ask anyone with information about Alya Reynolds to call police. Alya's father called police yesterday morning to report that his daughter was not in her bed and couldn't be found. She was last seen sleeping at about 10 p.m. Friday by a family member. (AP Photo/obtained from Facebook) ASSOCIATED PRESS



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

The two seized vehicles were in the driveway at 29 Violette Ave., where Alya lives with her father, 24-year-old Justin DiPietro. The SUV, a 1996 Ford Explorer with a sticker on the rear windshield for the United States Marine Corps, is registered to DiPietro, according to records from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. The car, a 2002 Hyundai, is registered to a Portland woman whose name is not being made public.

Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey disclosed little new information during an afternoon news conference Monday, acknowledging only that a neighbor had reported hearing a motor vehicle arrive at the girl's home Friday night.

Massey has said there were several adults at the home Friday night when Alya went to bed. At least one of them was not a family member, he said.

“This is a missing person case,” Massey said, declining to share additional details.

Ayla Reynolds, wearing a soft cast from a broken arm, was last seen sleeping in her bed at about 8 p.m. Friday. DiPietro reported her missing Saturday at 8:51 a.m. when he found an empty bed, police said.

The girl's mother, Trista Reynolds, 23, is living in Portland without a permanent address, Massey said.

Reynolds told ABC's “Good Morning America” on Monday that she had filed paperwork seeking sole custody of the toddler Thursday, the day before the toddler was last seen in her bed in Waterville.

“I've had no contact with him; he's had no contact with me. All I know is he's the last man to see my daughter, and all I want to know is where she is,” she said.

Reynolds had filed a complaint against DiPietro for determination of paternity, parental rights and responsibilities and child support, according to documents obtained Monday from Cumberland County Superior Court in Portland.

Reynolds said she hasn't talked to DiPietro since Ayla was reported missing. The two live apart, with DiPietro in Waterville and Reynolds in Portland.

DiPietro could not be contacted for comment and police were not allowing anyone near the Violette Street home.

### **Her nickname is 'Buggy'**

Becka Hanson, Trista's mother and Ayla's grandmother, said in a telephone interview that she believes the child should be with her in Portland, not with her father in Waterville.

She said the state Department of Health and Human Services took custody of the child in October and turned her over to DiPietro.

"My daughter went into rehab; me and my oldest daughter had Ayla, and DHS had her removed from us to go with her dad," Hanson, 45, said. "I believe DHS did that because they don't like my family. They had no reason to take Ayla."

Hanson said Ayla was with her father when she broke her arm. Police have said the child's arm was broken in an accidental fall about three weeks ago, but have declined to provide further details.

"Ayla is — was — a happy little girl; she enjoyed being with me and her mom," Hanson said. "She always had a smile on her face, always. I'm trying hard not to think that (something bad) happened to her. Her nickname is Buggy — that's my Buggy."

"She was born April 4. She was born on Easter Sunday, 2010. I want my granddaughter home. I want her safe. She needs to come home and be with us."

Hanson said Ayla has a little brother, Raymond, nine months old, who lives with Trista Reynolds. They are staying in a motel in South Portland, Hanson said.

Whitney Raynor, Trista Reynold's stepsister, also confirmed that welfare agents had placed Ayla with her father while the mother was in rehab for substance abuse. Raynor said that, in addition to the broken arm, Ayla recently had bruises.

DiPietro didn't know about the court filing for custody of Ayla, Raynor said.

### **Massive search**

Waterville police, Maine State Police, the Maine Warden Service and the FBI are conducting the investigation, which began with a 911 call to police Saturday, some 10 to 12 hours after Ayla was last

seen.

As the search entered its third day, a Maine Warden Service plane circled overhead and wardens searched a stream near the father's house. Residents joined in canvassing the neighborhood over the weekend for any signs of Ayla.

Some residents joined in the search. Carrie Harvey, who lives nearby, found a sippy cup lid in the neighborhood and turned it over to a warden.

"It's sad. Christmas is right around the corner. My heart cries out for that lady," Harvey, a mother of five, said of Ayla's mother.

Massey said 70 law enforcement officers worked the search Monday, including 25 game wardens, who trolled the waters of icy Messalonskee Stream, a few blocks from the house, in an airboat and circled the area in an airplane.

"It's a very open case," Massey said. "We don't want to miss anything along the way; we're looking at every lead and all possibilities."

Massey said the child's parents are cooperating with the investigation.

He would not speculate if the child was still alive. Overnight temperatures have dipped into the low teens the last few days.

At the house and grounds at 29 Violette Ave., where the toddler was staying with her father, a mobile Maine State Police evidence response unit was parked in the driveway. Investigators took photos of the side door to the gray, vinyl-sided home in the quiet Waterville neighborhood; two state troopers and Waterville police officers were stationed outside.

The house is DiPietro's childhood home, and he moved there four to six weeks ago, a neighbor said.

"It's just so sad, so sad. I hope we end up with a live child," said Ellen Paul, a retired Colby College employee who lives across the street from DiPietro's home. "I'm heartbroken for anybody to go through that kind of pain."

A state police special crime incident command and communications truck was in full operation in the Waterville City Hall parking lot. A command post was set up inside the city council chambers.

Massey would not say Monday if investigators suspected forced entry into the home or if they found blood or other forensic evidence in or around the house.

The search, he said, was concentrating around Messalonskee stream. He said police have received some important leads from the public.

“The focus, obviously is to bring Ayla Home — everybody is hoping for that,” Massey said.

Doug Harlow — 612-2367

[email protected]

Associated Press writer Glenn Adams and David Sharp contributed to this report.

## AYLA REYNOLDS

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 and weighs approximately 30 pounds.

Her left arm is in a sling and soft splint. She has short thin blond hair.

The Waterville Police Department asks that anyone with information about her whereabouts call 680-4700.

READ OR POST COMMENTS

Share



Were you interviewed for this story? If so, please fill out our [accuracy form](#)

[Send questions/comments to the editors.](#)

RECENT

READ

SHARED

**Our View: Maine delegation should unite against EPA cutbacks**

**Prosperity Summit planned for March 22 in Farmington**