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# Ayla's father talks about her broken arm

WATERVILLE -- Justin DiPietro said he wants to end widespread speculation about his daughter's broken arm by talking publicly about the incident.

BY [BEN MCCANNA](#)



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WATERVILLE — Justin DiPietro said he wants to end widespread speculation about his daughter's broken arm by talking publicly about the incident.

“I know there's value in explaining it,” he said. “But to me, I know what the truth is, and it's unbelievable for people to make the accusations that they've made.”

DiPietro's daughter, 21-month-old Ayla Reynolds, was reported missing Dec. 17. She was last seen wearing green one-piece pajamas and a soft splint on her left arm.

Waterville Deputy Police Chief Charles Rumsey said police conducted extensive interviews on the day of Ayla's disappearance and believe there is nothing suspicious about the broken arm.

“That was completely accidental,” DiPietro said of Ayla's injury. “I would never harm my daughter.”

DiPietro, 24, said the accident occurred on a rainy night in November, but he's unsure of the exact date.

DiPietro had just returned from the grocery store with Ayla. He went into his mother's home on Violette Avenue with bags of groceries in one arm and Ayla in the other.

“I was carrying her,” he recalled during a Thursday interview with the Morning Sentinel. “Usually I let her walk, but it was raining out that night and it was dark.”

DiPietro said he walked in the side door at 29 Violette Ave. and up a short set of stairs leading into the kitchen.

“I came up the stairs and slipped. It happened so fast, I don’t know exactly how I fell on her, but I fell on her,” he said. “It’s burned into my brain.”

His mother, Phoebe DiPietro, 47, was in the next room.

“I was sitting in the living room with my daughter, and we heard a big thump,” she recalled Thursday. “I immediately went to the kitchen and Ayla was scared, obviously. I picked her up.”

Phoebe DiPietro said Justin’s wrist was injured in the fall, but Ayla appeared to be OK.

“I was more worried about (Justin’s) wrist, because he’s broken it into 39 pieces (in a snowboard accident),” she said.

Everything seemed normal afterward, they said. The family sat down for a lasagna dinner, then put Ayla into pajamas for the night.

“We hung out for a little while after,” Justin DiPietro said. “She was a little fussy here and there, but if you’d seen her, you wouldn’t have known anything was wrong with her.”

The next day, DiPietro left to attend a commercial driver’s license course at Lawrence Adult Education in Fairfield. Before he left the driveway, however, Phoebe DiPietro called him back in into the house.

“When I came in, she showed me Ayla’s hand and it was swollen,” he said.

Ayla wasn’t crying, Phoebe DiPietro said. So, the family weighed a decision.

“It was my last class,” Justin DiPietro said. “I paid a fairly good amount of money for that.”

DiPietro considered skipping class, but his mother advised against it.

“I was, like, ‘We have to bring her to the emergency room,’ and she said, ‘Well, she’s fine right now.’”

Phoebe DiPietro said the injury appeared to be a bad bruise, but nothing serious. During the day, however, Phoebe DiPietro noticed the full extent of Ayla’s swelling after looking under the toddler’s sleeve.

Justin DiPietro said he left class early because he was concerned about Ayla.

“When I got home, we went to the emergency room,” he said.

DiPietro said the ER staff originally thought Ayla had a deep-tissue bruise.

“I said, ‘Can we still do X-rays?’ And they said, ‘We’re still going to,’” he recalled.

A doctor told DiPietro that Ayla’s forearm was broken, it might require surgery and Ayla would need to see a specialist.

Justin chose to see Dr. James Kuhn at MaineOrtho in Portland.

“He looked over the X-rays, and said, ‘I don’t know what they told you initially, but this isn’t as bad as they said,’” Justin recalled. “They just put a splint on there with an Ace bandage. She didn’t even have a cast or a sling or anything like that.”

DiPietro said Ayla’s arm was healing well in the days before she disappeared.

“Her arm was to the point now, before all this happened, that she was lifting it up. She wasn’t bending it, but she would take (the splint) off sometimes, and she was getting to the point where she was starting to use that arm again,” he said.

DiPietro said he’s aware of several widely held beliefs about the broken arm.

For instance, he said, some people have questioned the timelapse between when the injury happened and when they went to the hospital.

DiPietro said some people have suggested that he didn’t take Ayla to the hospital immediately because he may have been intoxicated at the time. He said that’s untrue.

DiPietro added that if he had known Ayla’s injury was more serious than a bruise, he would have skipped his class.

“The class, the money, that wouldn’t have mattered to me,” he said.

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