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# New website offers fresh details on Ayla

WATERVILLE -- A new website dedicated to 21-month-old Ayla Reynolds offers fresh details about the day the toddler was reported missing more than a month ago, describing "instant panic" as people awoke to find the toddler had vanished from her bedroom.

BY **BEN MCCANNA**



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WATERVILLE — A new website dedicated to 21-month-old Ayla Reynolds offers fresh details about the day the toddler was reported missing more than a month ago, describing “instant panic” as people awoke to find the toddler had vanished from her bedroom.

The site also says that Justin DiPietro was unaware he was Ayla’s father until she was 7 months old.

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The website, [www.thislittlelightofmaine.com](http://www.thislittlelightofmaine.com), was launched this week by Angela Harry, a blogger and friend of DiPietro. She said she hopes it will raise awareness of the toddler's disappearance. Harry, 36, lives in Washington, D.C., but used to live in Maine. She has known DiPietro since he was 8 years old, she said.

Harry said she has kept in touch with DiPietro over the years, and they have spoken on the phone nearly every day since Dec. 17 — the day Ayla was reported missing from her Violette Avenue home. DiPietro could not be reached Friday for comment.

The narrative posted on the website is a compilation of those phone conversations, Harry said during a phone interview Friday with the Morning Sentinel.

DiPietro last saw Ayla on Dec. 16. Harry describes the evening as ordinary.

There were six people in the house: DiPietro and Ayla; his sister Elisha DiPietro, 23, and her young daughter; and DiPietro's girlfriend Courtney Roberts, 24, and her young son. Roberts and her son were visiting from Portland.

Ayla was sleeping in a room by herself, Harry said. Elisha DiPietro and her daughter shared a room, while DiPietro, Roberts and Roberts' son shared a room in the basement.

“The night of Friday, December 16th, 2011, was no different than most any other night,” Harry wrote. “Everyone went to bed, Ayla was checked on at 10 p.m., and sometime after 8 a.m. on that Saturday morning, people in the house started waking up and realizing that their entire world had just turned into a nightmare.”

Elisha DiPietro was the first person to wake up that day, Harry said.

“It was at about 8:30 (a.m.) that Justin's sister, whose room is closest to (Ayla's) room, awoke and started moving about the house in her Saturday morning routine,” according to the website account.

Elisha DiPietro checked Ayla's room and discovered Ayla wasn't there.

“After a rushed trip down the stairs and the discovery that Justin did not have Ayla either, there was instant panic. (DiPietro) bolted up the stairs, knocking over the gate that was placed there every morning for the two little girls, and into her room. Nothing. She wasn't there. She wasn't anywhere inside. Outside —

nothing,” Harry wrote.

Ayla was reported missing at 8:51 a.m., according to Waterville police.

In previous interviews, DiPietro has declined to discuss the details surrounding Ayla’s disappearance, but Harry said DiPietro has given the new website his blessing.

“He’s aware of the website and I know he appreciates it,” Harry said Friday.

The Major Crimes Unit of Maine State Police is investigating the case. Steve McCausland, spokesman for the state police, said he hadn’t seen the website as of Friday evening. He added it’s unlikely he would comment on its description of Ayla’s disappearance.

The website also discusses the circumstances of DiPietro’s custody of Ayla.

“Justin had found out that he was a father when Ayla was 7 months old,” Harry wrote. “He never even knew Ayla was on the way, so he didn’t get to meet her when she was born. When he found out that he had a child, he was happy to be a Dad and he tried to learn things quickly.”

Ayla’s mother, Trista Reynolds, lives in Portland. Reynolds and DiPietro had never been in a committed relationship, Harry wrote.

Ayla has been living with her father in Waterville since mid-October, when Reynolds entered a rehabilitation program for substance abuse. Previously, DiPietro lived in Portland with three friends, but moved in with his mother, Phoebe DiPietro, when he gained custody of Ayla.

“He’d recently had to leave Portland to have a better home environment for Ayla since he had just gotten custody of her and was working towards getting on his feet in Waterville — and out of the temporary room he had in the basement of his mom’s house,” Harry wrote.

Harry said the website is meant to offer support for the family and to raise awareness about Ayla’s disappearance, Harry said.

She said Ayla’s disappearance has had a lasting impact her personally.

“My understanding of what happened from that day on, through many conversations, have forever changed me,” she wrote. “The things that have taken place since then defy reason, to be honest. I can’t believe that we still haven’t found this precious little girl. It is more apparent than ever that if we don’t round up the help of everyone we know and all of their friends too, Ayla could be waiting to see her Daddy for a very, very long time.”

Harry also said the ordeal has been difficult for DiPietro.

“He wakes up to this again and again, in the face of a foaming-at-the-mouth public that is hell-bent on making him the villain in a tabloid event,” she wrote. “I pray for him daily, as I pray for his daughter’s safety, well-being, and quick return.”

On Friday morning, Trista Reynolds told NBC’s “Today” show that she believes Ayla is alive.

“I think she’s alive and she’s holding on and she’s being a strong little girl right now,” Reynolds said. “I love her so much, and I want her home.”

Earlier in the week, Reynolds sat for a polygraph exam, but was told by examiners she couldn’t complete the test because of a medical condition. She declined to discuss the medical condition with NBC.

Trista Reynold’s family set up a website shortly after Ayla’s disappearance, [www.aylareynolds.com](http://www.aylareynolds.com).

Ben McCanna — 861-9239

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