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Ayla Reynolds website generates controversy

WATERVILLE -- The author of a website dedicated to missing toddler Ayla Reynolds said she anticipated controversy when she launched the site last week.

BY [BEN MCCANNA](#)



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WATERVILLE — The author of a website dedicated to missing toddler Ayla Reynolds said she anticipated controversy when she launched the site last week.

“I expected there would be a firestorm. I just didn’t expect that I would give them so much material to work with,” Angela Harry said Monday during a phone interview.

Harry, 36, is a longtime friend of Justin DiPietro, the father of 21-month-old Ayla, who was seen last more than a month ago. Last week, Harry’s newly launched website provided details of the morning Ayla was reported missing.

Now, however, the story is gone.

On Saturday, an article about Harry’s website appeared in the Morning Sentinel. Over the weekend, Harry revised the website, www.thislittlelightofmaine.com, several times. First, Harry added a new detail to clarify the series of events of Dec. 17, she said. Later, Harry removed the story altogether.

Those changes have elicited strong reactions from readers of the Morning Sentinel website, OnlineSentinel.com, and other websites. Readers also have been critical of the focus of the original story, saying it gave disproportionate weight to DiPietro and his girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, rather than focus on the missing girl. Some readers have speculated that DiPietro and Roberts helped Harry write the story as a means to improve public relations.

Harry dismissed those accusations Monday. DiPietro could not be reached for comment.

Harry's original story said DiPietro's sister, Elisha DiPietro, discovered Ayla's room was empty, and she informed DiPietro that his daughter wasn't in her room. Later, Harry revised the story to say it was Roberts who told DiPietro.

Harry said the revision was a clarification, not a wholesale change.

"It's not that I'm changing my story," she said Monday. "It's just that I wrote something that wasn't clear; and when I clarified it, it set everybody off."

Harry said she should have included a sentence saying Elisha DiPietro told Roberts about the missing child, who then told Justin DiPietro.

Harry said she noticed the omission over the weekend and decided to clarify the story. She did not talk to DiPietro regarding the change, she said.

"No, we didn't have to talk," she said. "I immediately saw (the omission) and went back in. I thought, 'Oh my God, I can't believe I did that.' I just cannot believe I wasn't more careful. So, no, we didn't even have to talk about it."

On her website, Harry discusses her decision to remove the story altogether.

"I did that only because it did generate a lot of ridiculous speculation and totally false statements that made me question if having it there was worth the price," she wrote.

Many readers have claimed Harry's positive portrayal of DiPietro and Roberts appears defensive. Harry said defending DiPietro was partly the point.

"If I came across as being defensive of Justin in my retelling of the story as I understood it, it is because I had read the accusations towards him, and I do feel defensive for him," she said.

Harry also said she is the sole author of the website.

"There are people who believe I wrote this with the help of other people, which is unequivocally,

absolutely not true,” she said. “Not a single person had anything to do with what I wrote other than the fact that I asked (DiPietro) what happened over the course of weeks. I compiled that from my memory of the conversations, but I didn’t ask anybody, ‘How should I write this?’”

Readers also have suggested that Harry helped DiPietro write his two news media statements, released on Dec. 20 and Dec. 28.

“I had nothing to do with them. I remember laughing when I heard that. He wrote them,” she said.

Harry acknowledged that addressing public speculation might not change perception.

“I don’t think anything is going to. I think they’ve made their decisions, and that’s probably that,” she said.

Another website, www.aylareynolds.com, published on Sunday a timeline of DiPietro’s relationship with his daughter. The site is maintained by Jeff Hanson, a friend of Ayla’s maternal family.

The timeline describes injuries that Ayla suffered while under DiPietro’s supervision, according to four members of the Reynolds family.

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