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# Ayla investigators doubt story

WATERVILLE -- Police said Saturday that the three adults who last saw missing toddler Ayla Reynolds are withholding information and that the possibility that someone slipped into the house and took Ayla "doesn't pass the straight-face test."

BY [AMY CALDER](#) STAFF WRITER AND [BEN MCCANNA](#)

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WATERVILLE — Police said Saturday that the three adults who last saw missing toddler Ayla Reynolds are withholding information and that the possibility that someone slipped into the house and took Ayla “doesn’t pass the straight-face test.”

The comments came the same day that police confirmed blood was found in the basement of the house during a search several weeks ago.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



**BALLOONS:** Justin DiPietro, far left, and Trista Reynolds, center left, parents of missing toddler Ayla Reynolds, release balloons during a vigil in Castonguay Square in Waterville. Becca Hanson, right center, mother of Trista Reynolds, and Amanda Benner, far right, friend of Trista Reynolds, also are seen. *Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans*



MOTHER: Trista Reynolds takes a moment during a vigil for her missing daughter in Castonguay Square in Waterville on Saturday. *Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans*



COMFORT: Trista Reynolds, left, is comforted by her friend Amanda Benner during a vigil for missing toddler Ayla Reynolds in Castonguay Square in Waterville on Saturday. *Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans*



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Steve McCausland, spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety, said police believe the three adults who allegedly last saw the toddler Dec. 16 have information they have not given police that may lead to Ayla's whereabouts. He added that the kidnapping scenario is unlikely.

“There were three adults in the home, and their version of events is not backed up by any forensic evidence that we have located,” McCausland said Saturday afternoon. “That someone slipped into the home in the middle of the night, while three adults are there ... that someone went into the bedroom where Ayla was sleeping alone, removed her and vanished into the night — and that the three adults did not see or hear anything — doesn't pass the straight-face test.”

There were six people in the 29 Violette Ave. house on Dec. 16 — DiPietro and Ayla, his sister Elisha DiPietro and her young daughter, and DiPietro's girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, and her young son, according to Justin DiPietro.

McCausland said state police have taken several hundred pieces of potential evidence from the DiPietro home, including the blood, which was discovered during a full-scale investigation in late December.

"We find the discovery of the blood troubling, and it's also frustrating that we think the three adults in the home that night haven't told us everything they know," he said.

McCausland added that police don't yet know whose blood it is, but it is being analyzed in the state police crime laboratory in Augusta. He said he wouldn't discuss how much blood had been found or how it was discovered.

At a vigil for his daughter Saturday afternoon, Justin DiPietro wouldn't comment on what he thought the discovery meant.

"I'm not going to answer any questions about it, but I will say this: If there was something there, I don't think I'd be standing here with you right now," he said.

Ayla's grandmother, Phoebe DiPietro, also wouldn't discuss the discovery.

"Personally, I do not believe anything happened to Ayla other than she was taken," she said. She owns the Violette Avenue house, but was not there the night Ayla disappeared.

Portland television station WMTW reported Saturday that DiPietro was told about the blood by investigators and he left the police station when he was shown crime scene photos of blood stains in the home that were made visible with the chemical luminol.

McCausland said Saturday he couldn't confirm that account.

Ayla's mother, Trista Reynolds, said at a vigil Saturday afternoon that she was trying to process the information about the blood.

In an interview earlier in the day with the Morning Sentinel, she said she was preparing herself for any outcome.

"As a mother, as a parent, you need to mentally prepare yourself for the good, the bad, the worst," she said. "I have been preparing myself for all of it during the last 40 days. I have told myself anything can happen. I could get the greatest news or I could get the worst news ever."

## Pair meet at vigil

At the vigil, DiPietro and Reynolds, appearing together for the first time in public since their daughter disappeared, hugged, stood together for photos and later had a lengthy private conversation on the City Hall steps, away from the crowd. The meeting was in sharp contrast to the animosity in comments made by the pair since Ayla's disappearance.

The vigil in Castonguay Square outside City Hall drew more than 60 people, including friends, family members and supporters of the parents.

During the two-hour vigil, which started at noon, word spread about the blood found in the house.

"This is my prayer — that she's found alive," said Selena Johnson, of Augusta, sister of Justin DiPietro's mother, Phoebe DiPietro.

Johnson learned about the blood in the basement at the vigil.

"I don't know how to feel, other than that I really want to talk to my family," she said tearfully. She and her sister were later seen hugging.

She added that her sister's advice to her was not to read the news reports about Ayla's disappearance. "She said she's going to give her faith to God and the FBI," Johnson said.

Trista Reynolds arrived with her mother, Becca Hanson, and stepfather, Jeff Hanson, and immediately was swarmed by reporters.

Trista Reynolds said she was at the vigil to thank all of the people supporting her and her family. Then she asked reporters to leave her alone.

"I don't have the answers that you guys are looking for," she said.

She greeted and hugged supporters and intermittently cried, wiping away tears.

"I want to know where she is and who took her," she said at one point.

At 1:23 p.m., she spoke on her cellphone and then announced that Justin DiPietro was on his way to the vigil.

He arrived shortly thereafter, he and Trista Reynolds hugged and then they stood together.

They held balloons, he a green one (reportedly one of Ayla's favorite colors) and she, a pink balloon with

the word princess on it. Ayla was wearing pajamas with the words “Daddy’s Princess” on them the night she disappeared.

Reynolds handed DiPietro a magic marker with which he wrote “I Love You, Ayla,” on his balloon.

Together, they released their balloons into the sky.

The pair, both wearing Ayla T-shirts, moved to the City Hall steps where they hugged Bob Vear, a Waterville resident who organized the vigil.

They then climbed a few steps to the doors of City Hall and spoke together privately for about 20 minutes, Reynolds rocking back and forth for much of the time as she held onto the railing.

The crowd and reporters watched them as they engaged in what appeared to be a serious discussion.

Before the vigil ended, Reynolds and DiPietro stood together once more when Hanson asked them to pose for another photo. The crowd then dispersed.

Amy Calder — 861-9247

[email protected]

Ben McCanna — 861-9239

[email protected]

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