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DiPietro family could be helping more, say police

State police spokesman Steve McCausland said Thursday that the paternal family of missing child Ayla Reynolds could be doing more to help investigators.

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

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State police spokesman Steve McCausland said Thursday that the paternal family of missing child Ayla Reynolds could be doing more to help investigators.

He said detectives are encouraging the DiPietro family to keep Ayla's name in the public, something the family of Ayla's mother, Trista Reynolds, has been doing through a website, billboards and interviews with the news media.

"We continue to encourage the immediate family to keep Ayla in the headlines and to talk about her," McCausland said. "One side is doing that, and the other side is not."

Earlier this week the Reynolds family posted details about the investigation to www.aylareynolds.com that they said were shared with them by police, including the claim that Ayla's father, Justin DiPietro, bought a life insurance policy on Ayla shortly after he gained custody in October.

McCausland won't confirm those details, but on Wednesday Ayla's mother told the Morning Sentinel that she found out about the policy "through law enforcement."

Reynolds said she questions DiPietro's motives for the insurance policy.

"It's messed up," she said. "What parent takes out a life insurance policy on their child? Especially on the same week he took her from me. Why would you do that? What was the reason for taking out a life insurance policy on her?"

The new details follow the revelation that investigators found blood belonging to Ayla in the basement of home of the toddler, who was 20 months old when she was reported missing Dec. 17.

Trista Reynolds said that as the investigative details pile up, it's difficult to remain optimistic.

"I have days when I think negative thoughts, and I wonder to myself, 'Is she still alive, or is she dead?' But, I can't think in the negative. If I do, it's not going to get me anywhere," she said. "I'm still trying to figure out what happened to her. Where did she go?"

Reynolds said Valentine's Day was particularly difficult.

"Ayla and I were each other's Valentines last year. It was just me and her," she said. "My birthday is coming up. I keep praying that maybe she'll be my birthday present. I didn't get her for my Christmas present, so maybe I can get her for my birthday present."

Ayla's grandfather, Ron Reynolds, issued a challenge to DiPietro Thursday. He said he wants DiPietro to explain what happened on the night she was last seen in the DiPietro home.

"That eats me up every day," an emotional Ron Reynolds said from Portland, where he lives. "Why didn't they protect her? Why didn't he protect her? He was responsible for her safety and welfare."

Police say DiPietro, his girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, and his sister, Elisha DiPietro, were in the home that night but aren't telling everything they know. DiPietro's mother, who owns the house, wasn't there that night, police said.

DiPietro couldn't be reached for comment Thursday, and his mother didn't return a message.

Ron Reynolds, a hospital security officer and former Marine, said he was thankful to police for their efforts. And he said he's trying hard to keep the faith that his granddaughter will be found alive.

"I just hope she's OK," he said.

McCausland said investigators continue to work around the clock on the case of missing child Ayla. He said the number of tips from the public has exceeded 900.

“We continue with as much energy and determination as when we began two months ago,” McCausland said. “At this point we would have liked to have had more answers, but that has not stopped the resolve to get those answers.”

Morning Sentinel reporter Ben McCanna contributed to this report.

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