

# BDN MAINE Mid-Maine



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## 100 show up for Ayla Reynolds vigil despite poor weather

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Organizer Lisa Howard of Vassalboro shows off her Ayla's Angel T-shirt during a Teddy Bear vigil in front of Waterville City Hall on Saturday, March 3, 2012. Fellow organizer Anne Dixon of East Vassalboro (left) stands by. *Buy Photo*



By Alex Barber, BDN Staff  
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**WATERVILLE, Maine** — Cold rain and slushy condition didn't keep nearly 100 people from showing up at a vigil for missing toddler Ayla Reynolds.

Guests were asked to bring teddy bears, and they were placed on the steps of city

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hall. Green bracelets, candles and candy were also given away to help keep Ayla in the public's eye. Many of the guests were children.

"I just want people to not forget her," said Laurie Bingham, who runs a Facebook page called Ayla's Angels. "It's for Ayla to get her name back in the media."

Attention for Ayla "was starting to fade out, so we thought we'd help bring it back," said Lisa Howard of Vassalboro, who is one of the organizers of the event along with Bingham.

Twenty-month-old Ayla Reynolds was reported missing from Justin DiPietro's Waterville home on Dec. 17 by DiPietro, her father, who lives there with his mother. DiPietro told police he last saw Ayla when he put her to bed the night before. Police are calling her disappearance a crime and have said that DiPietro and two other adults in the home that night haven't been totally forthcoming.

Ayla's grandmother, Phoebe DiPietro, along with Justin DiPietro's sister, Elisha, attended the vigil, but declined to comment.

There are several groups of Facebook dedicated to Ayla Reynolds, said Bingham, but she started her own group anyway.

"I just wanted to give her a voice because it seemed like a lot of other pages weren't doing that," she said. "They were doing a lot of arguing."

Bingham said her page has received 470 "likes." Most have been local, but some have been from as far away as Michigan, Texas and California.

Each person that "likes" the page is considering an angel for Ayla, said Bingham. Some members have T-shirts that have their number on the back.

Bingham, Howard and Anne Dixon of East Vassalboro, another organizer, said they have no relation to Ayla or her family and haven't done anything like this before.

"How can you look at this picture and not fall in love?" Dixon asked as she pointed to a button on her jacket that had Ayla on it. "I don't know her. I don't know any of the family, but I feel like I've known her this whole time."

Some of the teddy bears will be brought to Violette Avenue where Ayla was reported missing. Others will be donated to police departments.

"We'll be donating them to police departments or anywhere where a child could use a little friend," said Bingham.

Local businesses also helped the cause by donating items. Dixon said Hannaford donated cupcakes and Yardgoods also made a donation. But teddy bears were the focus.

"Some of us made personalized [teddy bears] to give to the family, or hopefully Ayla at some point," Bingham said.

Bingham said she's hopeful that Ayla is alive and well and will be returned, but knows that may not happen.

"We use our common sense, but we're holding out hope that someone does have her or that she's OK," Bingham said. "People gave up on Elizabeth Smart, and I didn't, so it can happen. That's what we hope."

"I want her to be found and I want her to be able to go home," Dixon said.

Another vigil is planned by the family of Ayla for April 4 in Portland.

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