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VIDEO

Mother's grief evolving one year after disappearance of Ayla Reynolds

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By Christopher Cousins, BDN Staff
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Posted Dec. 02, 2012, at 6:02 p.m.
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GORHAM, Maine — A coffee cup, a vase, a water bottle, a magnetic refrigerator calendar, dog-eared photos and a T-shirt now worn and faded, all with beaming, blond-haired Ayla Reynolds on them.

There are reminders of the missing little girl all over her mother's apartment — not that Trista Reynolds needs reminders — but pictures and memories are no substitute for a running, jumping, laughing and sometimes screaming child. And they certainly can't take the place of a living and breathing two-year-old girl.

"There are days I can't even hear her voice anymore," said Reynolds. "That's not OK."

As horrible as losing Ayla was, Reynolds said she's thankful for a lot. A year ago, even before her daughter's disappearance, Reynolds faced losing both of her children. Her running, jumping, laughing and sometimes screaming son Raymond, now the same age as Ayla was when she vanished, is a daily reminder of how close addiction to drugs and alcohol came to taking everything.

Reynolds, who was in an addiction rehabilitation program last year before Ayla's disappearance, said the toddler never would have been in Waterville, where she disappeared from, if it weren't for Reynolds' hospitalization. Reynolds said she partially blames herself for everything that has happened, but is grateful it's not worse.

"I couldn't imagine myself losing both of my kids because of my stupid

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mistakes,” said Reynolds. “I have lost a lot because of having an addiction. I lost Ayla from it.”

Raymond is still too young to understand, though a glimpse of his sister’s picture has him babbling her name in toddler-speak that only his family can decipher. Most people say Raymond is a mirror image of his sister, and Reynolds said the mischief in his smile when he’s throwing clothing all over his room or fiddling with the telephone is the same as Ayla’s. And [he dances just like she did](#) whenever Ayla’s favorite song plays on the radio — Maroon 5’s “Moves Like Jagger.”

“Sometimes it’s like she’s still with me,” said Reynolds.

Reynolds, now sober and living in an apartment in Gorham after months of living with family members, said Raymond’s well-being is her singular focus. She knows there are difficult conversations ahead, especially when it comes to his sister.

“When I look at him I think, ‘what will I tell him?’” she said. “I haven’t been able to put it into words yet. I don’t want to tell him something and have him start to blame me.”

Rarely, if ever, has a missing-person case in Maine attracted so much attention. Still, Trista fears her daughter is gradually being forgotten. After a months-long national media deluge, calls from reporters have grown scarce and new information from investigators is at a standstill. Maine State Police spokesman Stephen McCausland said Sunday what he’s said for months: No new developments. The case remains open and active.

Reynolds was reported missing on December 17, 2011, by her father, Justin DiPietro of Waterville. Police ruled out the possibility that Ayla was abducted early in the investigation and have said repeatedly that they believe DiPietro and others who were staying at the home last December [know more about the case than they are telling detectives](#). In January, they announced that they’d [found Ayla’s blood](#) in DiPietro’s basement and in May, they said they [no longer believed Ayla was alive](#). Investigators have [periodically performed searches of bridges and waterways](#) around Waterville, but said those efforts have turned up nothing related to the case.

Reynolds said her grief is still searing, but it’s evolved.

“It’s still painful, but I have been able to cope a lot better lately,” she said. “I’m always thinking about how how tall she’d be right now and what words she’d have. I imagine that her beautiful blue eyes are looking right through that blue sky down at me.”

[At least two events](#) are planned around the anniversary of Ayla’s disappearance. At 6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 15, at the Riverton Community Center at 1600 Forest Ave. in Portland, supporters will gather for a “Shining Hope for Ayla” event that includes a silent auction. Half of the proceeds will benefit an organization called LostNMissing Inc., which has been assisting in the search for Ayla, and the rest will benefit efforts in New York and New Jersey to recover from Hurricane Sandy. Attendees are asked to bring a wrapped children’s gift, which will be donated to children who suffered losses during the hurricane. Contact Cynthia Caron at 603-965-4621 or lostnmissing@comcast.net for information or to donate items to the silent auction.

At 6 p.m. Dec. 17, a caroling and candle-lit walk will begin at the Lutheran Church at 36 Cool St. in Waterville and continue to Violette Avenue, the site of Ayla’s disappearance.

It is one of the oldest papers in the world and the third fanciest. I think it should be put in a very large box and guarded by as many as two fat old men. Too fat to move. And no one should look at it ever again or think about it. So yes, it is important.

Cumberland County Jail investigating suicide attempt

PETER PETER PORTLAND EATER AT BDN



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