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Thursday, March 23, 2017 Last update: 4:24 p.m.

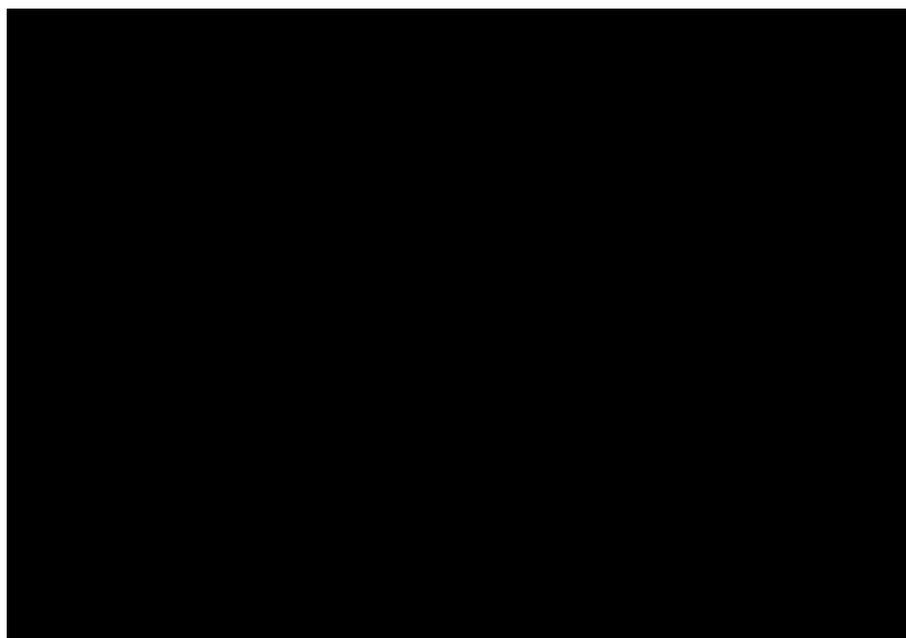
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Police vow commitment to solving Ayla Reynolds disappearance

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By Alex Barber, BDN Staff
Posted Dec. 14, 2012, at 4:13 p.m.
Last modified Dec. 15, 2012, at 9:30 a.m.

WATERVILLE, Maine — As the one year anniversary of the disappearance of toddler Ayla Reynolds draws ever closer, police reaffirmed Friday that they will not give up searching until she is found.

Stephen McCausland, spokesman for the Maine Department of Public Safety, as well as Waterville Police Chief Joe Massey, Maine State Police Detective Sgt.

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Jeffrey Love and Maine Warden Service Lt. Kevin Adam spoke about their involvement over the past year and their commitment to finding Ayla.

Monday, Dec. 17 marks the one year anniversary of when the 20-month-old girl went missing from her father's home on Violette Avenue in Waterville. Investigators conducted numerous interviews with those closest to the child and searched the home, neighborhood, woods and waterways in the ensuing months, all to no avail.

"We will continue until we get the answers we need, especially the answer to the question, where is little Ayla?" McCausland said during a press conference at the Forum.

McCausland said there have been no new recent developments in the largest criminal investigation in state history.

"To investigators, Dec. 17 is a date on a calendar and does not change a thing about the scope of this investigation," he said. "We continue to follow the leads. There will be more searches."

Police conducted two searches in the last month, he said. One search was done in Mayfield Township and one in southern New Hampshire.

"Those were very localized and very concentrated, but not every search is of the magnitude of all the public searches that have taken place here in Waterville," said McCausland.

He did not have any figures on the cost of the investigation to date.

Although it is the largest criminal investigation in state history, it is the third largest search for a missing child in Maine history, he said.

Kurt Ronald Newman, 4, of Manchester was reported missing on Sept. 1, 1975, after he wandered away from his family's campsite at Chain of Ponds Public Reserve near Coburn Gore on the Quebec border.

That one "did not end with a happy ending," he said. "In fact, we never found him."

The other search did end well, he said.

"The other one I can think of in my history, which dates considerably back, was the search around Mount Katahdin in the 1930s for Donn Fendler. That did have a happy ending and a remarkable life followed," said McCausland.

A 12-year-old Fendler went missing from a hike on the mountain on July 17, 1939. He survived nine days on the mountain before being rescued. Fendler, now in his mid 80s, resides in Newport.

Ayla's condition is unknown, but the search continues.

Lt. Adam said the main search area in Waterville has stretched about 7 1/4 miles from north to south and about 5.2 miles wide.

"As we move forward, we'll keep expanding out to try to find where Ayla is," said Adam.

For investigators, the search has been an emotional one, said Massey.

"This is a case that has pulled at the heartstrings of all of us," Massey said. "And that is why we're so committed to following this investigation through to its end. Even though we approach the one year mark of Ayla's disappearance, we're committed today as we were the first day of the investigation."

Police have recently patched communication with Ayla's father and his family, said McCausland.

is to one of the crates placed in the woods and the other 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.

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PETER PETER PORTLAND EATER AT BDN



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State police talked to three Waterville relatives in the past month — Justin DiPietro, Ayla’s father; Phoebe DiPietro, Ayla’s grandmother; and Alisha DiPietro, Ayla’s aunt.

“It was a frank conversation that we had with those three individuals,” he said. “There has been some renewed communication that had not taken place prior.”

Trista Reynolds, Ayla’s mother, told the [Bangor Daily News earlier this month](#) that 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 2-year-old girl.

“There are days I can’t even hear her voice anymore,” said Reynolds. “That’s not OK.”

Detective Sgt. Love said that over the past year, police have followed up on 1,300 leads.

“Those leads have spanned to 40 different states,” said Love. “From Maine to Florida, Texas, California, Alaska, Hawaii and even into Canada.”

McCausland encouraged people to call leads into state police. However, he told a certain group to stop calling.

“First of all, we don’t want anymore psychics calling us,” said McCausland. “Of the 1,300 [leads], 300 have been psychics. Not one piece of information that has been offered, even though it’s well-meaning, has amounted to anything. The psychics need not call anymore.”

Instead, McCausland is asking anyone with first-, second- or third-hand information or anyone with specific items found that may be relevant to the case to call police.

“Those are the types of calls we want at this point,” he said, adding that every lead called into police has been followed up on.

The case remains open and active.

“The investigation is not going to close until we get the answers necessary. The big answer is, where is Ayla? We will work as long as it takes to get the answer to that question,” McCausland said. “We will never close this case until we get the answers. It will take as long as it takes to get those answers. We have a committed team. They’re in it for the long haul. We’re in it for Ayla.”

BDN writer Chris Cousins contributed to this report.

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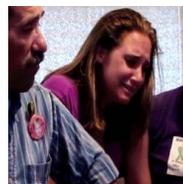
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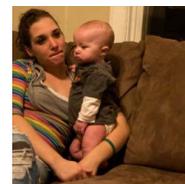
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