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Activists seek tourists' help in finding Ayla Reynolds

A group of activists hoping to find missing toddler Ayla Reynolds is seeking to enlist tourists into the search effort.

BY KAITLIN SCHROEDER STAFF WRITER

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WATERVILLE — A group of activists hoping to find missing toddler Ayla Reynolds is seeking to enlist tourists into the search effort.

John Pomerleau, site administrator for United for Ayla, said members of the online group dedicated to finding the girl are hoping to enlist tourists through an effort dubbed "Tourists for Ayla" in the same way they enlisted hunters in October to search for clues to her whereabouts.

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Ayla Reynolds



Ayla Reynolds AP file photo



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Organizers are sending out posters with Ayla's photo and information to businesses and outdoor recreation hot spots. He said tourists often hike and boat in remote locations, and if made aware of the missing toddler,

they might spot something important to the search.

He said if people believe she is dead then they should be checking the woods and riverbanks for articles of clothing or signs of a body, and if they believe she was kidnapped then there is a need for the public to see her photo so they can recognize her if they spot her.

Pomerleau said the organizers sent posters on Friday to every state park and to town offices, campgrounds, Acadia National Park, fish and game associations, bait shops and anywhere else they think might get tourist foot traffic.

Pomerleau, who grew up in Lewiston but now lives in Virginia, said organizers had 500 posters professionally printed in Ohio by the sister of “Mountain Mama,” which is the user name of the other site administrator who lives in Maine. Half were shipped to him and half were shipped to her.

He said they’ve sent out around 450 posters so far. They also have a poster template posted on the website and are encouraging people to print their own and distribute them.

Laurie Bingham, 47, of Waterville, said Monday she received the 15 posters she requested and is also planning to print more copies to distribute.

She said it feels like awareness about the missing toddler has declined and she hopes Tourists for Ayla will change that.

“Sometimes with so much going on we forget that there’s a missing little girl and no answers,” she said.

Bingham has been involved with United for Ayla search efforts for more than a year.

“It’s scary to think somehow someone is getting away with this for so long,” she said.

It’s important for her, she said, to promote awareness so Ayla’s family does not become one of the families that never know what happened to their missing child.

Maine Department of Public Safety spokesman Steve McCausland said Friday that there are no new developments in the case and the investigation is still active.

Ayla was reported missing on Dec. 17, 2011, by her father, Justin DiPietro. No one has been named as a suspect.

Justin DiPietro contends that Ayla was abducted. Police say a kidnapping did not happen, and they believe the three adults who saw her last — her father, aunt Elisha DiPietro and Courtney Roberts — are withholding information in the case.

Investigators also believe Ayla is dead.

State police are asking anyone with information about Ayla to call them at 624-7076.

The United for Ayla website is at <http://united4ayla.com>.

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