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# Waterville walk for Ayla Reynolds includes prayers, brief confrontation

A group of Waterville area residents on Saturday said a prayer before walking to the 29 Violette Ave. home where Ayla Reynolds was last seen Dec. 16, 2011, then said several more prayers.

BY **JESSE SCARDINA** STAFF WRITER

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**WATERVILLE** — Starting in front of City Hall, a group of area residents, many wearing pink shirts with pictures of Ayla Reynolds on them, said a prayer today before walking to the 29 Violette Ave. home where the toddler was last seen Dec. 16, 2011.

Outside the house, the group said several more prayers.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



Wearing T-shirts in honor of Ayla Reynolds today, three of about two dozen participants in a walk pray for the missing toddler at the Violette Avenue home where she was reported missing in December 2011. In the background is a photograph of Ayla Reynolds. *Staff photo by David Leaming*



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“We’re doing this to show people that Ayla has still not been found and we want people to know that she’s

still out there,” said Karen Francis, 32, who organized the walk with the help of some local business sponsors and her friend, Jessica Verdejo.

“We just want people to understand that Ayla deserves justice,” Verdejo said. “She’s an innocent child. She needs a voice and if it has to be us, then we’ll do it.”

The group said it had a brief confrontation with Elisha DiPietro, who was leaving the house on Violette Avenue. DiPietro, the sister of Ayla’s father, Justin DiPietro, was one of the three adults at the house when Ayla disappeared.

“As she started to drive by she slowed down and we started saying ‘Where’s Ayla?’ Out of her car window she said ‘Why don’t you ask Trista?’” Francis said. “It’s just ridiculous.”

Trista Reynolds is Ayla’s mother.

Francis said last week’s confrontations outside a Portland courthouse between members of both the Reynolds and DiPietro families had little to do with the timing of the walk.

“I figured the faster we did it, the quicker people would know that she’s still out there,” Francis said.

She said she asked Reynolds to participate, but she couldn’t make it.

“She has a lot going on and is still very upset,” Francis said.

Reynolds and other family members clashed with members of the DiPietro family, including, Phoebe DiPietro and Justin DiPietro, inside and outside the Cumberland County courthouse in Portland Wednesday, where Justin DiPietro was answering charges unrelated to the missing toddler case.

He pleaded guilty to violating conditions of release. Charges that he assaulted former girlfriend Courtney Roberts were dropped. Roberts was also in the Violette Avenue house the night the 20-month-old was last seen.

Erica Ratner, at today’s walk with her husband Hayden Ratner and daughter Haeley, said that as a mother, she can understand what Reynolds is going through and attends such events to offer support.

“I feel the pain that Trista feels right now,” Ratner said, adding that her daughter was just a few months younger than Ayla was at the time she was reported missing.

“We’re hoping an event like this helps and eventually someone will speak out about what happened.”

Ayla was reported missing from the Violette Avenue home the morning of Dec. 17, 2011. Her father said he last saw her when he put her to bed the night before.

Police, who have said the ensuing investigation was the largest in the state's history, don't believe the three adults in the home that night have told authorities everything they know about what happened that night.

Earlier this month, Reynolds said police told her they found blood in the house.

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