

Woman in tote died of drug overdose With no signs of violence, death has been ruled accidental

 buffalonews.com/news/woman-in-tote-died-of-drug-overdose-with-no-signs-of-violence-death-has-been/article_16df4aa6-4c37-5479-a014-9bb46d22a682.html

By Lou Michel

February 18, 2009

Amanda L. Wienckowski, the young Lewiston woman found frozen, naked and stuffed inside an East Side trash tote last month, died from a drug overdose.

Erie County District Attorney Frank Sedita III said an autopsy also determined there were no signs of violence and that the manner of her death has been ruled accidental.

But that determination is not sitting well with Wienckowski's mother.

"I don't believe that at all," said Leslie Brill Fink, Amanda's mother. "I feel there's more to this and somebody needs to do their job and figure this out."

"Obviously, my daughter did not take off all her clothes and throw herself into the garbage can."

An investigation is continuing to determine who placed her body in the tote, which was discovered Jan. 9 in the alcove of a church across from the Spring Street house she was driven to by her roommate, Sedita said Tuesday.

"If the investigation reveals credible evidence of who disposed of her body in such a disgraceful fashion, we will prosecute," he said.

The determination that it was a fatal overdose caused by "acute opiate intoxication" was confirmed by all four medical doctors at the Erie County medical examiner's office after reviewing toxicology tests, Sedita said.

"There's no evidence of hypothermia, which means you have to be alive when you're exposed to the cold," Sedita said. "Nor are there any identifiable lethal injuries. In other words, no trauma indicative of foul play."

Fink said too many questions remain unanswered.

"Nothing makes sense," she said. "Nothing anybody is telling us makes sense."

"Did somebody give something to her that knocked her out -- then, took advantage of her, and, then, threw her out?" she said. "These are my questions."

Fink said semen was found on her daughter's body. She wants to know whose it was.

Her face was bloodied when her body was found. How did that happen?

She is also not satisfied with the accounts given by the man who drove her daughter to the address who claims "not to know anything" and the man she met there who says he "never saw [Amanda] before."

"I'm very, very upset, if, for whatever reason, this is what they're concluding."

he district attorney said, if the investigation produces evidence that an individual injected her with the intention of causing her death, "then you could prosecute for a homicide offense."

He cited a case his office is prosecuting against Julius C. Franquet, 41, of the Town of Tonawanda, who is charged with second-degree murder in the death of his girlfriend, Annmarie Paciorek, 38, for allegedly injecting her with a fatal amount of a prescription painkiller last December.

At this point, Sedita said it remains unknown if Wienckowski injected herself or if it was someone else.

The 20-year-old woman was reported missing once her family found out she had been taken to the house at 157 Spring St. on Dec. 5 by Adam Patterson, her 42-year-old roommate. Patterson told authorities he had received text messages and a cell phone call from her saying she would be delayed inside the residence.

Antoine Garner, the man Wienckowski went to visit for what police believe was a sexual encounter, was charged later on Jan. 9 by Buffalo police in an unrelated Oct. 18 rape. He allegedly choked a woman into unconsciousness by tightening a piece of cloth around her neck during the attack.

Garner's family has insisted that authorities wrongly labeled him a "person of interest" in the Wienckowski case.

Meanwhile, a close friend of Wienckowski's family has organized a fundraiser to help cover the cost of her funeral. The event is set from 6 p.m. to midnight March 21 in the Dom Polski Club, 576 Oliver St., North Tonawanda.

The gathering will include a silent auction, a 50-50 drawing, music, dancing and food. Admission tickets are \$20 apiece. For information, call Joanna M. Hemmerling at 444-1186.

Some of the funds will be used to create a memorial in Wienckowski's honor.

e-mail: lmichel@buffnews.com