

Funds sought for autopsy on woman from Lewiston Family members pursue outside examination

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By Lou Michel

November 14, 2009

A fundraising effort will start this morning to pay for exhuming and shipping the remains of Amanda L. Wienckowski to a team of West Coast forensic pathologists for a second autopsy, according to her family.

The 20-year-old Lewiston woman's frozen body was found Jan. 9 in a garbage tote near Spring and Clinton streets, across the street from a home where she was last seen alive Dec. 7.

Sending her body to Los Angeles for an examination by a group of forensic pathologists known as 1-800-AUTOPSY would cost \$15,000 to \$20,000.

"The Erie County medical examiner's autopsy failed to complete the investigation as to why Amanda passed away with its ruling of accidental death," Kenneth Fink, Wienckowski's stepfather, said Friday. "Other forensic scientists have reviewed the results of the autopsy and declared that Amanda died due to a homicide and not accidental death."

No one has been charged in Wienckowski's death, which remains an open investigation headed by Buffalo homicide detectives. The medical examiner's office ruled she died of an accidental overdose from a cocktail of painkillers and narcotics, including the "date rape" drug GHB, which in small amounts causes unconsciousness.

The doctors' group in Los Angeles, Fink said, specializes in second autopsies to clear up questions when questions have been raised about the initial results.

Leslie Brill, Wienckowski's mother, has said that Erie County autopsy findings were incomplete because of the date rape drug in her daughter's system and unexplained bruises on her arms and legs.

To clear up these questions, Wienckowski's family is launching "Pass the Boot -- Justice for Amanda," a fundraising effort at 10 a.m.

"Teams of volunteers will be collecting donations using boots at various intersections near where Amanda lived or worked," Fink said.

The locations for collections include:

River Road and Seymour Street, City of Tonawanda; Erie Avenue and Niagara Falls Boulevard, North Tonawanda; Sheridan Drive and Delaware Avenue, Town of Tonawanda; Delaware and Kenmore avenues, Buffalo-Kenmore border; Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road, Amherst-Town of Tonawanda border; French and Borden roads, Cheektowaga; Broadway and Crittenden Road, Village of Alden; and Transit Road and Seneca Street, Elma.

Those who can't get to a location, can make donations at area branches of Bank of America in the account named "Justice for Amanda."

If the fundraising effort exceeds the amount needed for the second autopsy, Fink said the money will be used to spearhead efforts for federal legislation to enhance tracking missing people 18 to 25 years old.

"It would be similar to Amber Alerts with missing children," Fink said.

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