

DNA on Wienckowski backs murder scenario, mother says

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By Lou Michel

June 22, 2010

Newly released DNA evidence obtained from the remains of Amanda L. Wienckowski further support the contention that she was sexually assaulted and murdered, her mother said Monday.

"We told the police we had been informed that Amanda was gang-raped, beaten and strangled," Leslie Brill said in a news conference. "We were given names by these informants, and we passed them on to the police. The DNA of the very people who we told the police we believe participated in the murder was found on Amanda's body."

One of the hairs found on the naked and frozen body of the 20-year-old Lewiston woman, whose remains were recovered from a trash tote Jan. 9, 2009, belongs to Antoine Garner, the man she had visited for an alleged paid sexual encounter Dec. 5, 2008, just before she disappeared.

Authorities said that does not necessarily translate into a criminal case and proves only that Wienckowski was in proximity to Garner. He has acknowledged to police that she entered his Spring Street residence but insists he is innocent of any wrongdoing.

"I feel so bad for Amanda and her family. There's so much attention on my son, and the real killer is right up under their noses," Sonya Garner said later Monday. She said police need look no further than Adam Patterson, the man who has acknowledged driving Wienckowski to her son's home.

Wienckowski's family launched an independent investigation with the help of attorney Steven M. Cohen and former Buffalo cold-case Detective Dennis A. Delano after the Erie County medical examiner ruled that her death was accidentally caused by a heroin overdose.

Cohen insists the medical examiner is covering up crucial facts preventing Erie County District Attorney Frank A. Sedita III from prosecuting the case.

The investigation is expected to reach a milestone when results from a second autopsy are finalized by a West Coast pathologist, Dr. Silvia O. Comparini, who was hired by the family and is expected to soon review the latest DNA evidence on the hairs.

Two other strands of hair found on Wienckowski's body, according to results from DNA tests ordered by the medical examiner, belong to two unidentified females.

In response to police saying it was possible that Wienckowski could have died from positional asphyxiation during rough sex involving a man weighing 280 to 300 pounds, Delano and Cohen said there was no evidence to support that possibility.

Despite contentions by local authorities that there were no marks on Wienckowski's neck, Delano said there are marks.

"I have the autopsy photos. Would you like to see them?" he said at the news conference conducted in the Amherst law firm of Hogan Willig, where Cohen works.

Delano said Garner and Patterson need to be taken into custody and questioned.

Though it appears Wienckowski's hyoid bone on the neck was not broken -- often a sign of strangulation -- Cohen said that in children and young women, the bone remains flexible and does not necessarily break during strangulation.

When the second autopsy's results are completed, Brill said, it will prove beyond a doubt that her daughter was murdered after she was given the date rape drug GHB.

Criticizing an article that appeared in The Buffalo News on Sunday revealing that police believe it is possible that positional asphyxiation could have killed her daughter, whom authorities described as a drug-addicted prostitute, Brill said:

"[The article] doesn't talk about the GHB that was found in her blood, a drug that she did not buy or abuse ever, a drug that has only one purpose, to make someone do something against their free will."

The release of the latest DNA evidence by county officials, Cohen said, "was a pre-emptive maneuver to attempt to control the explosion that would have occurred when the secret DNA evidence revealed that persons of interest were with Amanda when she was killed."

Wienckowski's body was found in the tote beside a church, which is across the street from Garner's Spring Street residence, near the intersection of Clinton Street.

To help unravel the mystery of Wienckowski's death, it was also announced Monday that a task force including physician-attorney John DeFazio, two nurses and additional lawyers, all from the staff of Hogan Willig, has been assembled.

"We're going to try and find out how Amanda Wienckow-ski's body ended up in a garbage tote and who put her there," said Corey J. Hogan, whose firm is donating the time and expertise of the task force members.

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