

Volunteers seek information on death

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By Dan Herbeck

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Friends and family members of Amanda L. Wienckowski continued their search for answers Sunday on Buffalo's East Side.

Volunteers gathered in the neighborhood where the 20-year-old Kenmore native was found dead in a garbage tote in January 2009, and they spent the afternoon handing out slingers seeking information about her death.

About 50 volunteers, many of them members of True Bethel Baptist Church, joined the effort.

"I didn't know this girl, but she was a human being," said Latasha Colbert, 27, who volunteered with her twin sister, Natasha. "This is a very sad, unsolved crime, and I just want to help."

"If something like this happened to a person in my family, I'd appreciate it if people came out and helped me, too," Natasha Colbert said.

About 1,000 slingers, with "Who Killed Amanda Wienckow-ski?" in bold letters at the top of each one, were handed out in the neighborhood, said organizers Lindsey Huetter and Kristen Walker. Both were friends of the young woman who died more than two years ago.

The slingers ask anyone with information to contact Steven M. Cohen, a family attorney.

While Erie County authorities have ruled that Wienckowski died of an accidental drug overdose, friends and family members are convinced that she was murdered. They say an examination by a medical expert hired by the family indicates that Wienckowski may have been strangled and that possible defensive wounds found on her body indicate she had been in a struggle.

Police said the young woman had turned to prostitution to support a drug habit. Her naked, frozen body was found in a trash tote on Spring Street.

Leslie Midzinski, Wienckowski's mother, took part in Sunday's slinger distribution. She said she was deeply moved by the willingness of volunteers to help and said she will not stop raising questions about her daughter's final hours.

"I do not know how this girl died, but I know she was found dumped in a garbage tote," said the Rev. Darius G. Pridgen, True Bethel pastor and Ellicott Common Council member. "We all agree on one thing: Nobody deserves to be put in a tote and left for dead."

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