

# Wienckowski's family, friends rally for answers in her death

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By Mary B.  
Pasciak

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Leslie Brill demands answers in the death of her daughter, Amanda Wienckowski, as family and friends held their annual vigil Sunday in front of City Hall.

By Mary B. Pasciak

Amanda L. Wienckowski's mother and a small group of friends and relatives took to the steps of City Hall on a chilly Sunday afternoon to publicly renew their call for justice in the young woman's death more than four years ago.

"We want answers and we want justice," said Leslie L. Brill, Wienckowski's mother. "We know Amanda was murdered."

She and others at the gathering said political interference has prevented them from being able to get her death ruled a homicide, something they said was a necessary first step in moving the case closer to resolution.

The 20-year-old woman's naked body was found in a trash tote on the East Side in January 2009, five weeks after her family reported her missing. An Erie County medical examiner ruled her death an accidental overdose.

A California pathologist hired by her family determined she was strangled. So did a pathologist in the Albany area who reviewed the case.

Relatives and friends said they are exploring a number of options that they hope might enable them to move the case forward.

A national group called Parents of Murdered Children has approached them, offering help through a program called Second-Opinion Services. The group provides volunteer medical, legal and investigative experts who review records and evidence and offer suggestions and information that might help a family get a case re-opened, according to the group's website.

"We will be contacting Parents of Murdered Children," said Michele Fisher, a friend of the family. "They will be helping us get answers. This has been going on almost five years. There needs to be justice."

Brill said that she also will be pursuing the possibility of asking a medical examiner in a neighboring county to examine the case. She said she has already approached authorities in Niagara County, who declined.

Republican mayoral candidate Sergio R. Rodriguez and his fiance were among the dozen or so people who gathered Sunday. Rodriguez said he was there to support Brill, who had reached out to him.

He called for federal authorities to investigate.

"The Department of Justice should step in," Rodriguez said. "It's just unseemly the way everything's going with this case. Clearly this is an injustice. Someone ends up naked in a dumpster, and we call it an overdose?"

email: [mpasciak@buffnews.com](mailto:mpasciak@buffnews.com)