

# \$100 million suit claims county mishandled Wienckowski case

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By Matt  
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The family of the late Amanda L. Wienckowski on Thursday filed a \$100 million fraud suit against Erie County officials, claiming the investigation into her death was handled improperly.

The suit names District Attorney Frank A. Sedita III, his office, the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office and retired chief county medical examiner Dianne R. Vertes.

About two dozen of Wienckowski's relatives and friends gathered in frigid weather Thursday evening outside the Kenmore Community Center off Mang Avenue to renew their demands for justice in what they contend was her murder five years ago.

The 20-year-old Kenmore native's body was found frozen inside a trash receptacle on the morning of Jan. 9, 2009, outside a church at Spring and Clinton streets in Buffalo.

Leslie L. Brill, Amanda's mother, who has her power of attorney and is the executor of her estate, filed what family spokeswoman Cheryl Haggerty described as a fraud suit against Sedita and Vertes, both individually and in their official capacities, as well as against the two county departments.

Haggerty said the summons and complaint in the suit were filed Thursday afternoon in State Supreme Court.

Brill, suffering from a severe case of laryngitis, and her daughter, Danielle Wienckowski, 29, said Dr. Silvia O. Comparini, a California pathologist hired by the family, has provided some additional information in the last 60 days about the discovery of Wienckowski's body near the Spring Street home of Antoine J. Garner, the man her family believes killed her.

Danielle Wienckowski said the new information confirmed Comparini's belief that Amanda Wienckowski was the victim of strangulation. The official autopsy report issued by the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office ruled her death was due to an accidental drug overdose.

Danielle Wienckowski said, “We’ve been waiting too long for something to happen” in the criminal investigation “and we are here tonight to let Amanda know that we are still fighting for her.”

Sedita’s office dropped a criminal investigation after the official autopsy report was made public.

In May, Garner began serving an 18-year prison term imposed by Erie County Judge Kenneth F. Case on his convictions for the rape of a 16-year-old Buffalo girl in both 2008 and 2009, a June 2011 choking and assault case and a July 2011 Buffalo home-invasion armed robbery. Garner has never been charged in connection with Wienckowski’s death.

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