

Communities rally for missing girl

by Sheri Larsen,
Central Maine Photography staff

Hushed murmurs floated amidst the patter of snow boots. The hallowed walls of the church embraced the cameras, the media, and each concerned soul in attendance. A teddy bear held vigil next to a sweet photograph in front of the altar. All were there for the same purpose, one special reason: to keep the flame ablaze for a missing little girl with the name of an angel, Ayla.

One month has passed since the disappearance of toddler Ayla Reynolds from her Waterville home on Violette Ave. And her surrounding community is not willing to give up the search or let her be forgotten.

The morning after the first vigil was held for Ayla, marking her reported disappearance, Bob Vear, a local resident and grandfather picked up the local newspaper to find his five-year-old grandson in an AP photo in front of the toddler's house. His arm was outstretched, his personal sacrifice and prayer for Ayla — a favorite toy, which he added to the makeshift memorial of cards, toys, and flower. "If my young grandson is big enough to give of himself for that little girl, I thought, then what can I do?" asked Bob of himself.

A question this heart-wrenching event has forced many to ask as well.

The white T-shirt he wore showed the cheerful image of little Ayla, the word MISSING stretching in capital letters across his chest. More T-shirts piled atop a table nearby. Green was the color ribbon chosen to show support, keeping hope alive. "The hearts of the community have been uplifting," said Bob Vear. "This is what community, large or small, is all about. No one has refused to help us. We are a community of one."

People settled in pews. A prayer was lifted up. The click of media photography captured still images, as shadows flickered from individual candles held by each attendee. Amazing Grace was sung.

One by one people stood to share thoughts and prayers for Ayla's family; some knew them personally, while others did not. A young woman, early-20s, took the microphone in her hand. Through trembling voice, she spoke. Though she did not know the family, Ayla's story had touched her heart. And as she suggested, that was the true point of gathering — people coming together, putting aside differences, and sharing in the common goal to bring comfort and hope to a family in need.

In the depth of silence, an unconscious connection was made, a sense of agreement without words.

The thought of a little girl being taken from her home, from the warmth of her bed, is disturb-

ing for adults and even more so for children. A mother pointed out that Ayla's disappearance reaches beyond the search and community involvement. Area children are aware. Some ask questions and wonder if this



Bob Vear, who helped organize the evening, speaks to the audience during the hour-long vigil.

Photo by Missy Brown,
Central Maine Photography staff

could happen to them. She encouraged parents to talk to their children.

Bob Vear then shared a relatable experience from his life, the night he woke to find his five-year-old grandson missing from his spare bedroom. The child had

merely wandered into the kitchen and fallen asleep near where the cats feed. But for this grandfather, and any parent, the initial panic that the child was missing carved a deep hole inside him. Through innocent eyes, the boy explained he wanted to keep the food warm for the cats. Bob couldn't condemn the child for such a selfless act. The same compassion, hope, and understanding are what our community can spare for this family.

More vigils and fundraisers are being coordinated to keep the search for Ayla in the forefront of the minds and hearts of people everywhere. As many are aware, reward funds have been donated. Any other monies raised will be used in search efforts, and if necessary, a future scholarship.

A Facebook Page entitled "This Little Light of Maine" has been created for supporters to leave encouragement and comfort for the family. Many leave daily prayers. If you would like to do so, log onto Facebook and LIKE the page. You can find other Facebook pages devoted to Ayla and her family by typing her name in the search column. Trista's family has also setup a website, aylareynolds.com.

Our community and the search efforts must remain a comfort and hope for Ayla, her family, and any family who has ever had to agonize over a missing child.

G&E Roofing recognized for safety

G & E Roofing celebrated 1,000 days no lost work time on December 6, 2011.

During the safety meeting, Norm Elvin, president of G & E Roofing, praised his staff for their attention to safety, citing that this was the second time in the company's 36-year history that 1,000-plus safe days had been achieved. "It is because of you looking out for each other that we are able to celebrate today," Elvin told his employees. G & E Roofing has a comprehensive safety program including daily stretching, safety training, rewards for every 100 days of no lost work time, tool-

box safety talks on the job as well as weekly safety meetings that focus on different job site potential hazards and procedures. Also, unannounced job site safety inspections are performed by top management on a routine basis. Elvin also stated, "There is a big emphasis, as there should be, on working safely."

G & E has been recognized in the past with many safety awards for their efforts. In 2006, G & E Roofing was also one of five Maine businesses to receive the 2006 Governor's Award for Business Excellence.



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