

Missing woman case in Grafton baffles investigators

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 31 2015 10:18 AM





GRAFTON - Heather Bardsley turned 42 on Wednesday and her whereabouts remain unknown, even after five extensive searches on ground and in the water near Grafton.

Bardsley was last seen Saturday night, Dec. 26, approximately between 10:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. at the area of North Cedar Street in Grafton, Illinois. She was wearing a grey sweatshirt, blue jeans and zebra print rubber rain boots.

Grafton Police Chief Marshall Lewis and his staff did an extensive search with other investigators with human scent trained dogs on the brisk Thursday afternoon, but he said that to his knowledge, nothing was turned up. Bardsley was last reported to be seen near her house after being dropped off by acquaintances. The small stream running across the road was moving fast that night and was at least two feet higher on Dec. 26 than today.

“We haven’t found anything new,” Lewis said Thursday. “We were not called about it until 16 hours after she was last seen on Sunday, Dec. 27. By that time span, we had to conduct our investigation and we were worried about extreme temperatures and rising waters about finding her as quickly as possible. We immediately started following leads, and all the leads and sources haven’t revealed anything on her whereabouts.”

Lewis said they have no traces of anything. Some have questioned why there wouldn’t be a tube of lipstick, a brush or something from her large purse if this did happen in the vicinity of where she was last dropped off.

“Keep in mind if there are flash flood waters, they can move a car or move whatever,” Chief Lewis said. “We are at the mercy of Mother Nature. It is a waiting game for the flood waters to recede before we can check other places.”

Chief Lewis stressed that getting this out to the public is very important at this time because Bardsley has not been seen or heard from in four days.

He said he and his staff responded immediately once they learned she was missing and took statements from the concerned friend and several others.

Lewis explained Heather has a long-term boyfriend, who she has a child with there in Grafton, and they in essence consider themselves husband and wife.

From what Lewis was told, she was at an establishment in Downtown Grafton a



nd was taken home by a couple she is familiar with. From what the people told Lewis, they had trouble crossing the creek and she got out on the dry part of the land and the couple finally got the car turned around and headed the other direction. When they looked back, they said they didn't see her, but they told Lewis they assumed she had gone into her house.

The police chief said five total searches have been done, including going into the under-road culvert system, although they could only go so far because of the high waters.

"Two Illinois State Conservation officers, two Grafton Police officers and Quarry Township Emergency Management volunteers conducted a second entrance search in the underground tunnel but high flood waters halted the search after the first 100 feet," said Lewis. "Human scent K-9 search team conducted a daytime search of the area with no solid leads."

Chief Lewis said Bardsley's disappearance case is completely baffling to the experienced police officers and investigators.

There was a recent tip received by the Grafton Police that a woman possibly fitting the description of Bardsley was spotted in Shipman the next evening after her disappearance. According to the tip, a woman was found walking in the middle of the road.

“A driver almost hit the woman and decided to give her a ride to a bar in Shipman,” Lewis said. The woman appeared to have met someone she knew at the bar, so the assisting vehicle left the woman at the bar. Anyone with any information about the woman left at the bar in Shipman, please contact the Grafton Police Department or local authorities.”

He stressed that anyone with any information about Heather, her whereabouts or suspicions of what may have happened to her, to contact the Grafton Police or any area law enforcement officials. (618) 786-3354.

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