



Trackhoe to be used to excavate canal where Heather Bardsley's wallet, boot were found

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GRAFTON - The search for missing person **Heather Bardsley, 42, of Grafton**, will continue Tuesday with a large trackhoe going to Grafton to excavate remaining parts of the canal near the river where some of her items were found.

Heather Bardsley was last seen between 10:30 and 11 p.m. Dec. 26 in Grafton near her house. A stream close to her house was rushing toward the river that evening with Grafton suffering flash flooding. It is suspected she may have been taken downstream to the river that night.

“I met with an excavating company who is going to bring in a big trackhoe to help look through the rest of the canal,” **Jason Bardsley, Heather’s brother** said. “The canal is 300 foot long and 30 foot wide. Local 520 is helping out and doing the excavating, although there will be \$2,000 of costs per day for permits and everything else. I can’t thank Local 520 enough. The company wants to remain silent about it.”

Jason said he has raised about half the \$2,000 for the permits needed for excavation, but will need additional funds to cover the remainder. He hopes people in the region will donate to help.

The required permits are legally necessary for transporting the trackhoe to and from Grafton. **Police Chief Marshall Lewis** emphasized that the required fees for the permits are not distributed from Grafton.

He said if they don't locate Heather at the end of the canal, then he plans to hire someone to run sonar near the canal in the Mississippi River.

Anyone wishing to donate can bring funds to **King Louie's Drive-In in Wood River** or an account for Heather set up at all the Bank of Edwardsville locations.

Jason said the plan is to dig the entire end of the channel up again, looking for any clues of Heather or her remains. He said it means everything to him what the excavating company is doing. He also commended the Grafton Police and all the volunteers who have looked up and down the canal looking for signs of Heather despite mud, cold and difficult conditions.

Lewis said they have discovered a Zebra print boot, which matches Heather's boots she had on the night she went missing. He said they also found her Coach brand wallet with her ID, driver's license, credit cards/ bank cards and one of her check stubs.

"No sign of Heather's remains have been found and it is believed that she may have been swept into the main channel of the Mississippi River during the initial flash floods and within those first several hours of the Mississippi flood," Lewis said. "It is this department's request at this time to reach out to as many down river communities as possible and other police agencies to spread the word of our missing person case."

Lewis said if any agency discovers an unidentified female matching the description above, please contact the Grafton Police Department.

Lewis added there is no reasonable suspicion or probable cause at this time to believe any foul play is involved. Given the time that has lapsed since last physical or phone contact by Heather and given the positively identified items linked to being Heather's; this case is currently considered a recovery of Heather's remains. It is suspected that she was swept in flash floods into the main channel of the Mississippi River and final confirmation will be determined upon the recovery of Heather's remains as to specific details surrounding actual cause of death, he said.

Grafton Police officer Peggy O'Neal had been involved in the search nearly non-stop and has been most helpful those present on Friday said.

Radena Clark of Wood River has been a friend of Heather Bardsley's for 25 years. She has been helping look for her in Grafton almost since she became missing.

She said Heather is the first friend she has lost and that Heather was "everybody's friend."

Marie Grigg, her aunt, was also out searching for Heather on Friday.

"The whole thing has been awful," she said. "I lost my son in 2004 and now this happened."

Grigg said she was going to stay with the search as long as they had to do it to try to find Heather, even if she had to go up and down the river.

"She is my blood and I want to find her," she said.

Kelly Phillips, another close friend, said Heather was like a "sister" and it has been incredibly difficult with her missing.

"We grew up in the same neighborhood," she said. "I am up here looking whenever I can get out."

Chrissy O'Dell said Heather's disappearance has made life very difficult for her and the others who work at King Louie's Drive-In in Wood River.

"This has turned my whole world upside down," she said. "They keep finding her stuff. I would just like to find her and put her to rest."

Anyone with any information about this case, please contact the Grafton Police Department 618-786-3354 or email at graftonilpd@gmail.com



