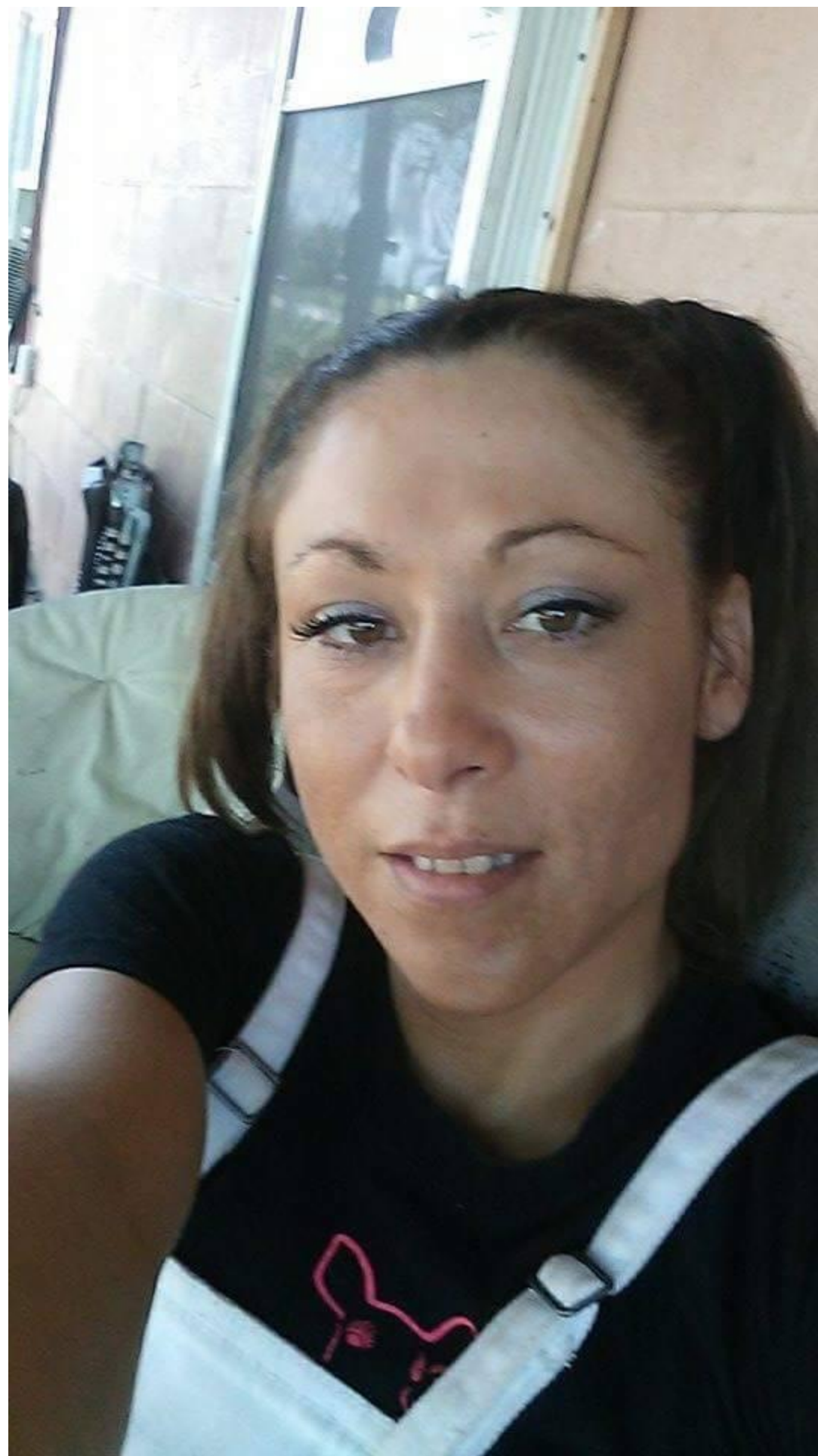


Foul play is suspected: Person of interest identified in Denita Hedden case

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ROYAL LAKES - The Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis believe the missing person case of Denita Hedden involves foul play and a person of interest has been identified.

Lt. Kris Tharp, Deputy Commander of the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis, said the conclusion about foul play is based on a myriad of factors including, but not limited to, evidence recovered during the squad's investigation.

"No information related to the evidence in this case will be released at this time," Lt. Tharp said. "The facts and circumstances surrounding this case have been provided to the office of Macoupin County State's Attorney Jennifer Watson."

The Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis has conducted 12 days of what Tharp described as "exhaustive investigative effort" into the disappearance of Denita Hedden. It was reported that Denita was last seen on the 700 block of Catalpa, Royal Lakes, Illinois at 11 p.m. on Jan. 25, 2018.

An extensive search operation, spanning seven consecutive days, has covered large portions of southern Macoupin County. First responders by way of land and air have canvassed over 35 square miles. This endeavor has included more than 22,400 acres of rural terrain and 70 road miles. Numerous police, fire, and specialized search teams, have spent hundreds of man-hours in the interest of finding Denita. Search efforts have continued into Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2018. The search for Denita will continue, Lt. Tharp said.

The Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis wants to emphasize the importance of Macoupin County property owners, farmers, and residents, inspecting their property for anything unusual in the interest of finding Denita. Investigators implore local residents traveling county and rural roadways to report anything unusual they may encounter or observe. This request is made not only to those residing in the immediate vicinity of Royal Lakes, but also areas which may extend beyond perceived search boundaries. Even if first responders and search teams have been in your area please take a moment to check your surroundings

Denita, a white female, is 5'0", and weighs approximately 110 pounds. She was last observed wearing a maroon Nike hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and brown boots. She was wearing hoop earrings. Images of Denita Hedden taken on Jan. 25, 2018, are attached to this press release for review.

The Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis extends prayers to the family and friends of Denita Hedden in this most trying of times. The investigation into this matter has transitioned back to the Macoupin County Sheriff's Office.

Anyone with any information surrounding the case should call the following:

St. Louis Regional Crimstoppers

1-866-371-TIPS (8477)

Macoupin County Sheriff's Office

217-854-3135 Ext: 1

Macoupin and Montgomery County Crime Stoppers

1-800-352-0136