



Wednesday » July
27 » 2005

Relatives charged in autistic woman's death

Criminal neglect

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Police have charged the adopted sister and brother-in-law of a developmentally delayed and autistic woman with criminal neglect after the 23-year-old was found dead in her Mississauga home in April.

When police responding to a 911 call arrived at a home on Fairwind Drive on April 2, they found Tiffany Pinckney in the basement. A coroner pronounced her dead at the scene.

"Our concern was her health and she had lost a considerable amount of weight," Detective Sergeant Gerry Harnden said.

After an almost four-month investigation, he said police charged two individuals based on witness statements, the circumstances of Ms. Pinckney's death and evidence discovered at the scene.

Allison Cox, 31, and her husband Orlando Klass, 32, are charged with criminal negligence causing death and failure to provide the necessities of life.

They were arrested on Monday and appeared briefly in Brampton court yesterday. Mr. Klass faced the judge in a blue shirt and khaki pleated pants and Ms. Cox was in jeans and a black, short-sleeved shirt.

Both accused are scheduled to appear in court today for a bail hearing.

"The allegations are simply allegations," said Selwyn Pieters, the lawyer representing Mr. Klass. "The evidence will come out in due course."

Police said Ms. Pinckney moved to Canada from the U.S. with her mother in the early 1990s. After her mother died in January, 1998, her adopted sister became her legal guardian and full-time caregiver.

Ms. Pinckney's sister and brother-in-law moved from their home on Forum Drive, near Hurontario Street and Eglinton Avenue, to the nearby Fairwind Drive in August last year.

Many residents on the street lined with two-storey homes and well-kept lawns, had not heard of or seen Ms. Pinckney or her family.

Det. Sgt. Harnden said Ms. Pinckney stopped using the services provided by regional agencies after her mother died.

He said the Children's Aid Society monitors the care that young people with disabilities receive under their legal guardians; but, "in a situation with an autistic and

developmentally delayed person over the age of 16, there is no agency out there that more or less supervises her with her care family."

He said he wishes more resources were available to adults like Ms. Pinckney.

"This should not have happened."

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