

Crime/911

TEEN'S TROUBLED LIFE

POLICE SEARCH FOR THIRD SUSPECT AS DETAILS EMERGE IN TORTURE CASE

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TRACY - "Nothing resembles normalcy or sanity" in the case of the 17-year-old boy who told authorities he was shackled and held captive in a Tracy home for a year, city spokesman Matt Robinson said.

Police began searching Tuesday for a third suspect - possibly the boy's aunt - who lived in the home that was his alleged prison, Robinson announced at a morning news conference.

The terrified teen was not attending school and had not been in contact with any other family members in more than a year, Robinson said. Yet the married couple - the wife a Girl Scout leader - and their four children also lived in the home. Neighbors reported what seemed to be a normal family and recalled purchasing Girl Scout cookies from the oldest daughter. And one neighbor said she frequently saw the teen outside the family home.

But "nothing resembles normalcy or sanity in this case," Robinson said.

A woman who might be the boy's aunt, Caren Ramirez, 43, took custody of the teen in early 2007 after he was removed from his parents' home, Robinson said. Not long after she took custody, however, Ramirez was arrested on and still carries a felony warrant for child abuse charges. The boy was returned to the care of Child Protective Services, which put him in a Sacramento group home.

"At some point after that, the teen and Ramirez reunited," Robinson said. "We're not sure when."

Investigators said Tuesday that Ramirez may have been headed to the East Bay on BART. Ramirez is described as black, 5 feet tall with short brown hair and brown eyes. She often wears a bandanna on her head.

When captured, Ramirez will face the same five charges as the couple who were arrested: torture, kidnapping, child endangerment, corporal injury to a child and false imprisonment, officials said.

The case came to light Monday afternoon when the terrified and bloodied boy ran into a fitness center wearing nothing but boxer shorts and a heavy chain wrapped tightly around his ankle. Covered in soot and blood, he told

gym staffers that he had been held captive in a home on Tracy's Tennis Lane for a year. He begged them to help him hide.

"It wasn't something I thought was real," said Raelynn Lagadon, 24, a personal trainer at In-Shape Sport who gave the boy some food and water. "It was like something you'd see in a horror film or 'CSI.' Who would do that to somebody?"

Police arrested the adults who lived in the nearby home - Michael Schumacher, 34, and Kelly Schumacher, 30, who also might have gone by the name of Kelly Layne Lau. The Schumachers are each being held in lieu of \$1.2million bail. A subsequent search of their home found further evidence implicating them, said Robinson, who would not describe what officers found.

Authorities said they believe the boy had been chained to a car seat but picked up a dropped key, unlocked himself and fled when the car stopped.

Police obtained a warrant at midnight Monday to search the Tennis Lane home. Authorities have released few details of what they found in the house, where the teen may have been held captive, or the relationship between the Schumachers and Ramirez.

Authorities also have released few details about the Schumachers. Both declined jail interviews.

Kelly Schumacher started serving as a Girl Scout leader in September after a background check turned up nothing to cause concern, said Pam Saltenberger, chief executive of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California.

Jennifer Foster, 33, said she and Kelly Schumacher became acquainted through their children, who were neighborhood playmates. Foster said she first noticed an older boy with the family about a year ago.

"She told me that he was a nephew that was staying with them because he was having problems at home," Foster said. The boy was outside frequently, and his appearance never suggested anything unusual was happening behind closed doors, though she last saw him in May, she said.

Kelly Schumacher's MySpace page is full of fun-loving family photos of her four kids, ages 9, 7, 3, and 1 - all of whom are now in the custody of Child Protection Services. On MySpace, Schumacher describes herself as a hopeless romantic who loves movies such as "Gone With the Wind."

She further states on her page that she is "happily married to a man who I love to death. He is my best friend and a wonderful father to our 4 kids and I wouldn't trade him for anything in this world. We live in Northern California where I am a stay at home mom and my husband is a contractor. We have a typical life I guess."

Her favorite television shows are "anything that's gruesome. I'm weird I guess," she wrote on her MySpace page.

Neighbor Mary Wagner said she spent some time with Kelly Schumacher and often bought Girl Scout cookies from her daughter. She said she had seen Ramirez at the house on occasion but never saw the 17-year-old boy.

"I was over there recently, because she has some nursing experience, and I had her help me take my blood sugar," Wagner said. "I'm shocked by this. Just shocked.

"Her kids are all healthy," she added.

The Schumachers are scheduled to be arraigned at 1:30 p.m. Thursday.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Tracy Police Department at (209) 831-4550.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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