

NEWS RELEASE

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Investigators Seek Tips in 2016 Vinton County Fire

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — State and local officials are offering a reward of up to \$15,000 for information regarding a May 2016 structure fire that claimed the life of a 5-year-old girl in Londonderry (Vinton County).

The fire was reported shortly after 3 a.m. on May 9, 2016 at 30209 Stevens Branch Road. The Laurelville, Harrison Township, and McArthur fire departments all responded to the scene and discovered a detached garage and adjacent home both engulfed in flames. The residents were living in the garage while the home was being remodeled.

Five-year-old Aleigha Hayes passed away nearly a month later due to injuries sustained during the fire. Hayes' medical records indicated she had traces of illegal narcotics in her system when she arrived at the hospital. Her parents and siblings survived.

The investigation into the fire is being conducted jointly by the Division of State Fire Marshal's Fire and Explosion Investigation Bureau (FEIB) and the Vinton County Sheriff's Office. The investigation has remained open since the fire occurred and recent information provided to the Vinton County Prosecutor's Office suggests additional witnesses may exist.

"I rarely share investigative photos with the community for a variety of reasons. In this instance, and with a desire to raise awareness about the tremendous impact drug addiction is having on our children, I am choosing to do so," Vinton County Prosecutor Trecia Kimes-Brown said. "This picture has haunted me since the day I first saw it.

"I believe someone has information about what happened the night of this fire," Kimes-Brown added. "I believe law enforcement and my office owe an obligation to this little girl and her siblings who survived to close this case and bring peace and justice to these children in the event criminal activity was involved. I sincerely hope this picture will impress upon everyone the gravity of the fate Aleigha suffered. I further hope, with that in mind, someone will come forward to help us close this case."

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A reward of up to \$5,000 is being offered by the [Blue Ribbon Arson Committee](#) for information regarding the fire. This reward has been in existence since the fire occurred, but the Vinton County Prosecutor's Office is offering an additional \$10,000 reward. The funds for this reward will be taken from forfeiture money seized in prior drug trafficking cases in Vinton County. Kimes-Brown said she believes there could be no more valuable use for this money than memorializing the life of a child through the pursuit of justice.

"In many cases, the smallest of tips can often generate the most substantial leads," said FEIB Chief Josh Hobbs. "Most people just don't think what they know or have is significant enough to pass along, but it is. Any information can be valuable."

Anyone with information or questions is encouraged to call the State Fire Marshal's tip line at **800-589-2728**; Chief Deputy Ryan Cain of the Vinton County Sheriff's Office at **740-596-5242**; or Vinton County Prosecutor Trecia Kimes-Brown at **740-596-5583**.



A bicycle once ridden by 5-year-old Aleigha Hayes sits among the wreckage caused by a fire at 30209 Stevens Branch Road in Londonderry.

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