

Child abuse covered up, records say

Ex-Keene man accused in death; mom, baby sitter protected him

By Sentinel Staff Writers
and Associated Press

ROCHESTER — The mother and relative who baby-sat a 21-month-old girl knew she was being abused months before she died, and protected the abuser, court documents allege.

Kassidy Bortner died Nov. 9. Her mother's boyfriend, Chad Evans, 29, is charged with second-degree murder and with eight charges of assault. Evans, a Keene native, is a former member of the Keene Board of Education.

According to court records, Evans had beaten Kassidy repeatedly during a three-month period, threw her against walls, and broke her leg and arm in separate incidents last summer and fall.

The court documents also indicate the child died after months of abuse that her mother, Amanda Bortner, 18, and two babysitters were aware of, but did not report.

Rochester District Court unsealed the documents on a motion filed by The Keene Sentinel.

Initially, authorities suspected Kassidy may have been sexually assaulted, too, but further investigation indicated that wasn't so.

Kassidy was pronounced dead at York (Maine) Hospital, where she was taken after Bortner's sister's boyfriend called authorities to report she was unresponsive. Evans had left the girl at the sitter's home in Kittery, Maine.

Although Kassidy died in Maine, Evans faces charges only in New Hampshire, because that's where he allegedly inflicted the child's fatal injuries.

While Maine authorities assisted in the investigation, "based on the evidence gleaned thus far ... we do not expect to bring charges in the state of Maine regarding the death of Kassidy Bortner or any other offenses against her," said Maine State Police Sgt. Matthew Stewart.

According to court documents, Bortner told police she knew of several instances when Evans beat the child. She told authorities Evans had pressed on her throat and on the child's throat during

could not bring Kassidy to the doctor's office because she had bruises from Evans' conduct." Both also allegedly agreed to lie about the cause of Kassidy's death.

Assistant N.H. Attorney General N. William Delker said he could not comment on any charges that Bortner, Marshall or Connelly might face for allegedly cooperating to hide the abuse.

Delker told The Sentinel this morning that suspicions about sexual assault were raised during examinations immediately following her death. After further investigation, Delker said, no evidence now exists that Kassidy was sexually abused.

"The state does not allege at this time, based on the status of the investigation, that there was sexual abuse," said N.H. Assistant Attorney General Christopher Carter. "The evidence that has developed over the two-month investigation so far has not created a basis for that to be part of the charges at this time."

Attendants at York (Maine) Hospital reported bruises all over Kassidy's head and body, and pinprick marks on her feet.

Evans admitted to investigators that he "played with Kassidy in a rough fashion to toughen her up," court documents said.

The Maine chief medical examiner's office has not yet released the results of the child's autopsy. Authorities say it may be months before they are.

The evening after Kassidy died, Connelly and Marshall told investigators they were with Bortner at the Anchorage Inn in Portsmouth. There, they heard Bortner talking on the phone with someone they thought to be Evans. Both said they heard Bortner say: "I know you slowly killed my baby," and "you wished she had never been born."

Evans made headlines in Keene in 1991 by winning a seat on the Keene Board of Education at age 19. Unopposed, Evans was elected overwhelmingly, but had to go to court to take his seat, because his

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According to court documents, Bortner told police she knew of several instances when Evans beat the child. She told authorities Evans had pressed on her throat and on the child's throat during arguments, head-butted her once, choked her a few times, and pushed her around when he got angry.

Evans' former wife, Tristin Evans, told investigators Evans frequently hit her in the face and pulled her hair during their four-year marriage.

Bortner's sister, Jennifer Connelly, one of the child's regular babysitters, told police she saw bruises on the toddler's face during the two months Bortner lived with Evans, and said the child had become fearful and withdrawn.

Connelly and her live-in boyfriend, Jeffrey Marshall, told authorities "it was almost a family joke that no one other than Marshall and Connelly could babysit Kassidy, due to concern that anyone else would report the injuries," court documents said.

The documents also allege Bortner and Evans "agreed that they

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Evans made headlines in Keene in 1991 by winning a seat on the Keene Board of Education at age 19. Unopposed, Evans was elected overwhelmingly, but had to go to court to take his seat, because his father's name was mistakenly put on the ballot instead of his.

Evans, then a manager at the Keene McDonald's restaurant, served on the school board for several months before the company transferred him to Rochester.

In the service

Robin F. Oke, son of Rebecca M. and Gary M. Oke of Stoddard, was promoted to corporal while serving with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron-364, Marine Corps Air Station, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Oke was promoted based on sustained superior job performance and proficiency in his designated specialty.

Oke is a 1997 graduate of Keene High School and joined the Marine Corps in August 1997.