

Ex-wife testifies in Evans' trial

By JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS
Foster's Daily Democrat

DOVER — Although she filed domestic assault charges against him while they were married, Chad E. Evans' ex-wife testified Monday in court he would not have beaten Kassidy Bortner.

Evans, 30, a former member of the Keene Board of Education, faces up to life in prison for allegedly inflicting the injuries that resulted in the toddler's death on Nov. 9, 2000.

Tristan Evans, Chad Evans' ex-wife, was the final witness during the fifth day of testimony in her former husband's second-degree murder trial. She recalled meeting Evans' girlfriend, Amanda Bortner, and her daughter, Kassidy, in August at the Rochester home they shared with her husband.

Tristan Evans said she was at the house almost every other day due to a custody arrangement she and Evans had for their then 3-year-old son. Their divorce was final in October 2000.

In March 2000, Evans pleaded guilty in Rochester District Court to one count of simple assault against Tristan Evans. At the time of Kassidy's death, he was on probation stemming from that charge. The jury will not hear about Evans' prior record for domestic assault or probationary status, however, as a judge ruled earlier that the information is inadmissible as character evidence.

On the witness stand Monday, Tristan Evans recalled Evans and Bortner began dating early in the summer of 2000. She described Kassidy's behavior on her visits to the Rochester home after meeting Bortner in mid-August.

"She was very quiet, very withdrawn, inactive," Tristan Evans testified, recalling Kassidy said "bye" to her only once. She went on to testify she became concerned about Kassidy around Oct. 21, 2000, when she noticed bruising on the left side of the toddler's face and down along her neck.

"At first I thought it was dirty until I leaned down to her," Tristan Evans testified, recalling saying "hey, baby girl" to Kassidy, who did not respond.

Tristan Evans said she asked Bortner what had happened and was told Kassidy fell down the stairs. A few days later, she said, she asked Evans and he replied Kassidy was jumping on the trampoline and he had to catch her by the face to keep her from falling. About a week later, Tristan Evans testified, she saw a dark purple bruise about the size of a quarter on Kassidy's face.

Although she did not ask Bortner or Evans, she said she was concerned. "Just from working in the medical field, you notice things," she said. Tristan Evans had explained earlier in her testimony that she is employed as a CT scan technician at a Boston-area medical facility.

Tristan Evans placed an anonymous call to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' child abuse reporting hot line on Oct. 31, 2000, she testified.

Last week, a case worker from the Rochester office of the Division of Children, Youth and Families testified about receiving a referral about Kassidy on Nov. 1 stemming from an anonymous call on Oct. 31.

The case worker was asked whether F. Jeffrey Marshall, Kassidy's baby-sitter at the end of her life, was ever mentioned in her investigation. She testified

she received no information about a baby-sitter. Throughout the trial, Evans' defense attorneys have contended it was Marshall, who is the live-in boyfriend of Kassidy's aunt Jennifer Conley, who inflicted the abuse that caused Kassidy's death.