

Teen At Center Of Maryville Rape Case Recovering From Suicide Attempt **News**

Posted by : Randy

Posted on : 2014/1/8 8:16:04

(kansascity.com)- Daisy Coleman, the northwest Missouri teenager whose alleged 2012 sexual assault in Maryville has garnered national attention, was recovering Tuesday from a suicide attempt



Robin Bourland, a longtime acquaintance of the Coleman family, said Coleman was being treated at a Kansas City children's psychiatric hospital after ingesting unidentified pills Sunday evening. Coleman's mother, Melinda Coleman, first released news of the suicide attempt in a Facebook post Monday.

"It's been heartbreaking for them," Bourland said of the Colemans, who now live in Albany, Mo. "This has been a really long, drawn-out battle, and it's heartbreaking to see something like this happening."

According to Bourland, the incident stemmed from online harassment that Daisy Coleman, 16, received after attending a party over the weekend. A disparaging Facebook post generated additional harsh attacks, said Bourland, and "it just escalated from there."

Daisy Coleman's case gained national notoriety following an October story in The Star detailing the alleged sexual assault and the harassment that Coleman and her family received after making the allegations.

In the story, Daisy Coleman's family said she previously had attempted suicide twice in the wake of that harassment, much of it on social media, some at Maryville High School, where she was a freshman.

The case centered on a January 2012 house party in which Daisy Coleman and a friend ages 14 and 13 at the time alleged they were sexually assaulted at the home of Matthew Barnett, then a 17-year-old Maryville High senior and the grandson of a former state representative.

Barnett was arrested on charges of sexual assault and endangering the welfare of a child, the latter for allegedly leaving Coleman incapacitated by alcohol and barefoot in her yard in 30-degree temperatures.

Also, 17-year-old Jordan Zech was charged with sexual exploitation of a minor, which involved using a friend's cellphone to film a portion of the encounter between Coleman and Barnett. (The case of a 15-year-old boy, who admitted having intercourse with the younger girl despite her repeated refusals, was handled in juvenile court.)

Two months later, however, Nodaway County prosecutor Robert Rice dropped the felony charges against the two older youths, citing a lack of evidence and, later, a lack of cooperation on the part of the alleged victims' families.

The mothers of both girls have insisted they were willing to cooperate with authorities until the felony charges were dropped.

In October, Jackson County prosecutor Jean Peters Baker was appointed to re-examine the case to determine whether fresh charges were warranted.

Although many have rallied around the alleged victims in recent months, an online "hacktivist" group Anonymous took up Daisy Coleman's cause, and last month The Huffington Post named her one of its "Most Fearless Teens of 2013." The girls' mothers have said that harassment has persisted locally.

In Facebook posts this week, Melinda Coleman indicated that her daughter had been "terrorized," and called on Anonymous not to lose interest in her daughter's case.

The group responded with a message via its Twitter page, assuring her that the family still has its support.

"The people who took to your daughter's case and did what they could to shed light on the injustices you were going through are devastated right now," the group's message read in part. "And at the same time, furious."

Gentry County officials last week, meanwhile, confirmed they were looking into the alleged planting of three skinned rabbits in a vehicle parked last month in the driveway of the Albany home of the younger girl in the 2012 case.

Peters Baker has declined to discuss her office's investigation while it is ongoing and has not provided a timetable for its completion.

"It's heartbreaking to have your daughter targeted by so many people," Bourland said, when asked about the emotional state of Daisy's mother. "And to feel like this is her (Daisy's) only way to cope."