

# Surveillance tapes give no clue about Marcus

BY LIZ CAREY | COMMUNITY PRESS STAFF WRITER

## Is this you?

ANDERSON TWP. -- Are you a silver-haired lady? Were you in Juilfs Park Tuesday, Aug. 15?

Liz Carroll said she talked to you and now police would like to talk to you, too.

Hamilton County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Steve Barnett confirmed that Liz Carroll has said she spoke to a silver-haired lady while her children were playing in the park.

Barnett said no one has come forward yet to verify that Carroll had all four children with her that day in the park.

If you are that silver-haired lady, deputies would like to talk to you. Anyone with any information about Liz Carroll, Marcus Fiesel, or that afternoon in Juilfs Park, should contact Hamilton County Sheriff's Office at 825-1500 or call Crime Stoppers at 352-3040.

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MOLLY MCCLURE

ANDERSON PARK BOARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDERSON TWP. -- Even usually tried and true paths of evidence have not led to clues in the search for Marcus Fiesel.

In fact, investigators now find they have no credible leads to go on at all.

Blood-hound searches, videotape evidence and an offer of reward have offered no further clues in the disappearance of a 3-year-old boy in Juilfs Park Aug. 15.

As part of the investigation, officials reviewed surveillance tapes from Juilfs Park. Steve Barnett, spokesperson for the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, said there were no usable images on the tape.

In fact, the tape was a blank blue screen, said Anderson Park Board Executive Director Molly McClure.

The machine was recording at the time, but it had not functioned properly. While the tapes are changed daily, McClure said, they are not reviewed on a daily basis, but only when something happens.

When asked for maintenance records for the park's system, McClure said there were not any since the video cassette recorder used was new, having been replaced within the past month.

The videotape recorder's failure may not have been that important, Barnett said.

McClure confirmed the camera was not located near where Carroll and the children were found.

Asked if a properly functioning camera would have made any difference, Barnett said it "probably wouldn't."

"For some reason on that particular day, the video didn't work," Barnett said. "But, it's in an area that we may or may not have gotten any usable information from it anyway."

Barnett also said bloodhounds brought to the site did not pick up on Marcus' scent. However, that was not conclusive of anything.

"By the time the dogs got there, and a sample of his clothes were brought for the dogs to get a scent from, it's not surprising they didn't pick anything up," he said. "There were so many people there, walking all over the scene, any scent may have been covered."

Additionally, Barnett said the department had not received any positive tips about Marcus since the disappearance, despite a \$10,000 reward posted by restaurateur Jeff Ruby.

"Normally, in a missing children's case, they generally are found or show up in the first few hours," he said. "Or at the very least you have a lot of calls about the child being sighted. That just hasn't happened in this case."

Although the community search for Marcus is over, Hamilton County sheriff's deputies continue to investigate.

"We're investigating any and all possibilities, as we would with any case," said Lt. Mike Hartzler, substation commander for District 5, which covers Anderson Township. "We've suspended searches until we have any credible information in regards to his whereabouts."

## **THE SEARCH BEGINS**

Marcus was reported missing Tuesday, Aug. 15, after his foster mother, Liz Carroll, passed out because of a heart condition.

McClure said park board employees were the first on the scene about 1:15 p.m. when Carroll was found.

"A family member of one of our employees came into our offices there at Julifs Park and said there was a woman down," McClure said. "We were the first to come to her aid. We saw three children with her. Four or five of us ran out there immediately."

McClure said sheriff's office, fire and rescue personnel responded to the scene immediately.

Within minutes, the sheriff's office had contacted David Carroll, Liz Carroll's husband, she said. At around 1:40 to 1:45 p.m., David Carroll asked about Marcus.

"We were all in shock when the father came in and said there was a fourth child," McClure said.

In a phone press conference from her hospital room Wednesday, Aug. 17, Liz Carroll told reporters she believed park employees had Marcus after she collapsed. The Cincinnati Enquirer

reported Aug. 17, that Carroll said she was told by a sheriff's deputy a park employee had Marcus.

Both McClure and Barnett said park employees and sheriff's deputies confirmed they only saw three children with Carroll.

Immediately after being told of a fourth child, the park employees and sheriff's deputies began searching for him, McClure said.

"We engaged everyone in conversation that we saw," McClure said.

Anderson Township Fire and Rescue Department Chief Mark Ober said sheriff's deputies continually followed leads throughout those first days, including checking up on a boy with black shorts and a red shirt out walking, who wasn't Marcus, or following up on found clothes, which were for an adult.

In addition to the volunteers the park district mobilized to search the park, a good number of neighbors in a one-mile radius of the park searched the neighborhoods after officers went door to door searching for Marcus.

According to Barnett, the search was extensive, covering more than five square miles.

"We've used Task Force One, Urban Search and Rescue, cadaver dogs, sheriff's dogs, sheriff's personnel, Anderson Fire and Rescue personnel, and hundreds of citizen volunteers, among others, in the search," he said. "Some areas were searched as many as eight times. That was initially with all of our departments and all of our volunteers. ... (Urban Search and Rescue) and Task Force One branched out way beyond that area."

The community search was officially called off Friday, Aug. 18.

Sheriff's deputies conducted a consensual search of the family's home in Union Township and took several items. Barnett said the sheriff's office would not comment on what was taken, but said items were taken with the family's consent.

## **AN OUTPOURING OF CONCERN**

Nearly 1,000 volunteers searched for Marcus in the first two days, Ober said. Volunteers "cleaned up the neighborhood" looking for him.

"There were so many people," McClure said. "It was a tragic situation, but it was so heart-warming to see the community respond. We had a constant stream of 200 to 250 people helping at any given time, and that is probably an under-estimate. It was the most amazing thing you can imagine. You want him to come home, but at the same time, it is amazing to see how our community is so special."

Pockets of people could be found searching throughout the 28-acre park Wednesday.

Cathy Baker came to search with her daughter and several neighbors.

"To have a young child missing, you can feel it in your heart," she said. "It hits close to home."

David Suttle and Jake Ward searched for several hours.

Both Explorers with area fire departments, Suttle with the Miami Township Fire/EMS, Ward with the Union Township Fire and EMS Department, the two searched for Marcus Tuesday, Aug. 15.

Ward carried a "10-million candlelight" searchlight. They searched storm drains and other areas where "a 3-year-old could get into. We've been told he likes to hide, he likes bright or flashing lights (and) he likes water."

Another volunteer, Debbie Timmerman, came from Fairfield to help.

Timmerman said she heard about Fiesel's disappearance on the news. As a mother of three, she said she felt an obligation to help.

"It's something that touched us," she said.

Others, like Ryan Perry and Mike Owens with the Southwestern Ohio K-9 Search and Rescue, worked through the night. They had been involved in search efforts since midnight.

Owens said the dogs were an advantage when covering heavily-wooded terrain covered with thick brush. The dogs also worked better at night, he said.

During the daytime, it's harder for the dogs because of the heat, he said.

"The dogs wore out pretty quickly this morning with the heat, the rough terrain and no air flow," he said.

However, after cooling off in an air-conditioned trailer, the dogs were ready for another shift. Owens said the dogs worked four-hour shifts during the evenings those first days.

Also overwhelming was the support of the business community, said Amy Mollette, Anderson Park District. Jersey Mike's brought sandwiches and drinks around the time people searching noticed they hadn't had lunch. LaRosa's, Donatos and Mio's brought pizzas and Kroger and Sam's Club brought supplies.

## **MARCUS WAS 'A HANDFUL'**

Barnett said Marcus was described as a handful.

"There were indications that he was very hyperactive," Barnett said. "He was described to us and we characterized him as a special needs kid. For sure, he was a handful. He had a tendency to run off. He couldn't communicate, although he was 3, he had only a few sounds he could make."

Butler County Child Services spokesperson Dawn Grady said she could not confirm any reports on Marcus' medical, emotional or mental conditions, if he even had any. Marcus' birth mother is a resident of Butler County.

Grady said the organization contracted with Lifeways for Youth in placing the boy in a foster home environment, and that Lifeways placed Marcus in the Carroll home.

Barnett said the Carrolls were responsible for many children.

"They took care of three of their own, as well as daycare they did for various families," he said. "At any one time, they would have as high as eight to 10 kids in the home."

At the time of his disappearance, Marcus was at the park with his foster mother, a 2 1/2-year-old toddler who was Carroll's biological son, a 1 1/2-year-old respite foster care child and a 1 1/2-year-old child whom Carroll was baby-sitting.

Barnett confirmed that although Carroll was responsible for four children, there were only three cars seats in the car at the time.

"We don't lend any credence to that," Barnett said. "They had so many kids they were taking care of I doubt all of them were in car seats when they were supposed to be."

Barnett said the three other children with Carroll had not been of any help in the investigation because of their age. The oldest was reported to be about 30-months-old.

The Carroll family has since moved from their Batavia home.

"They were in the process of moving, but when this happened, with all of the media attention, they decided to move early, is what we understand," Barnett said. "We know where they are. We're not concerned about the move."

As of Monday, Aug. 21, no credible leads for Marcus' whereabouts had been found, Barnett said.

"We have not had one person who has been able to give us positive, productive information, other than the mother, that the child was there," he said. "Does that mean the child was not there? No, it means that we cannot prove one way or the other that he was there."

Barnett would not guess at what it all meant.

"We don't speculate here," he said. "We have to work with evidence and facts."