



## THE MASSACHUSETTS DAILY COLLEGIAN

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This is a composite of all articles to feature the disappearance of Maura Murray in the *Massachusetts Daily Collegian*, the student run newspaper at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst.

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**February 17, 2004**

**“Missing Student a Mystery to Police, Classmates”**

**By Erika Lovley and Ferron Salniker, Collegian Staff**

Police are investigating the disappearance of a University of Massachusetts student who was last seen at the site of a car crash on Monday, Feb. 9.

According to the Boston Globe, Maura Murray, 21, of Hanson, Mass. crashed her car into a snow bank last Monday in Haverhill, N.H. The accident was her second in three days; Murray had recently crashed her father's car on Saturday of the previous weekend.

Murray disappeared from the site of the crash after a resident tried to help and who had called the police, despite Murray asking him not to, the Globe reported. Murray was gone upon arrival of police, her car left abandoned and undrivable, the Globe said.

Chief Jeff Williams of the Haverhill Police Department does not think foul play was involved.

“Our concern is that she's upset or suicidal, something the family was concerned about,” he told the Globe on Friday.

The accident took place along Route 112, about five miles away from Wells River, Vt., and a mile away from Swift Water Village by the Connecticut River.

Police used dogs, a helicopter and Fish and Game Officers to perform an immediate search around the crash site area and found nothing. The search has since been called off.

Murray is a junior nursing major, a Dean's List student who works in a local art gallery.

Two UMPD officers, Detectives Chris Thrasher and Brian Davies and two counselors from Mental Health Services visited a junior nursing class, Parent-Child Nursing, on Friday afternoon. Joan Cully, administrative director of the Office for the Advancement of Nursing Education and Eileen Breslin, dean of the school of Nursing were also present at the meeting.

In addition, an email was written by Breslin, and released to the UMass nursing community. According to the email, Murray sent an email to her faculty Monday afternoon at 1:24 p.m. indicating she was heading home for the week due to a death in the family and that she would contact everyone when she returned.

Lindsay Pemberton, a junior nursing major, has the same class schedule as Murray and was present for the meeting on Friday. Pemberton told The Massachusetts Daily Collegian that staff in the nursing department spoke to Murray's family, and were told that there were no recent family deaths.

“Also, her dorm room was all packed up, like she was planning on moving out,” said Pemberton.

The email to the nursing community also stated that Murray called her boyfriend, Army Lieutenant Bill Rausch, Tuesday morning. At the Friday meeting police said that Rausch only heard someone breathing on the other line. The police were unable to trace the call.

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According to Sharon Rausch, the boyfriend's mother, Murray had e-mailed her boyfriend on Monday afternoon, saying she needed to speak with him.

Murray's family, including Rausch, and his parents, have flown to New England and are passing out fliers along the New Hampshire-Vermont state boarder, hoping someone will recognize Murray.

"She was really quiet and didn't hang out with any of us," said Pemberton. "She was a sweet person, but she didn't get personal with anyone."

Murray and Rausch met at the U.S. Military Academy at

West Point. As of yesterday afternoon, the Haverhill police have had no leads in the case and hope that Murray will try to contact a friend or family member.

"The case is under investigation and we are not discussing it at this time," said the Haverhill Police Department.

May 4, 2004

**“Murray’s Mother Believes Daughter May be a Victim of Kidnaping”**

**By Elizabeth Joyce-Brandt Collegian Correspondent**

AMHERST- The mother of a University of Massachusetts nursing student still missing after nearly three months suspects foul play in the disappearance of her daughter.

Laurie Murray, mother of the missing student, Maura Murray, said she fears that her daughter has been kidnapped.

“Maura was abducted,” Murray said. “She is not a runaway, she would not do this to her family.”

Maura Murray, a junior and Hanson native, drove to New Hampshire on Feb. 9, after telling her teachers she would be gone for a week due to a death in the family. While driving east along Route 112 in Haverhill, N.H., Murray failed to make a sharp left hand curve near The Weathered Barn, which resulted in a single-car accident. A passerby, Butch Atwood, stopped to see if she needed him to call the police. Atwood told police that Murray refused.

According to police, Murray disappeared before they arrived. They found her car locked with her clothing inside. Her cell phone and credit cards have not been used since her disappearance.

“My thinking is that when she had her car accident up in Haverhill, she was walking up the road and she took a ride, she had to have... the [police] dog stopped in the middle of the road with her scent,” said Murray. “She had to get into someone’s vehicle. There were no footprints on either side of the road. She got into a vehicle, with the wrong person. You know, she could’ve been suffering from a head injury, her windshield was broken... she could’ve had trauma, amnesia.”

Although police say they have no evidence of foul play, they have not ruled it out. “Anything’s possible,” said Sgt. Thomas Yorke of the Troop F Barracks in Twin Mountain, N.H. Yorke said he believes that Murray had some type of plan.

“We are dealing with facts. She packed up her room.... she obviously had something on her mind,” he said. “Maybe she went to visit someone and that got interrupted.” Yorke also said there is some possibility that Murray may not want to be found.

“She may have just gone out on her own. She’s 21, she can be her own person,” Yorke said. “She may not want to be found, we’ll respect that. We just want to know so we can put people at ease.”

Police are currently following up on tips that they have received.

“[There are] different things that detectives are working on, though nothing is earth-shattering,” Yorke said. “Just miscellaneous tips, things like ‘I saw her the next day.’”

The search has been focused in the New Hampshire area. A helicopter search found nothing last week. Another ground search will be conducted sometime this week with help from area fire departments and Fish and

Game officials. Vermont authorities are aware of Murray’s disappearance and her close friends have contacted Canadian authorities, according to Murray.

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“Considering there is a very limited force up there [in New Hampshire], they are doing the best they can,” Murray said “There are only three or four of them [officers] to cover a large area, so I can’t say that they are [doing enough to find Maura].”

When questioned, Murray denied that the family recruited psychics to aid in Maura’s search.

“Actually, that was false information,” Murray said. “Any psychic who went up there, did it on their own, there was no one hired.”

Murray said she doesn’t believe in psychics and believes that her daughter is coming home. Police said they have no evidence to believe that Maura Murray is dead. “We are still hopeful that she’s found safe and alive. We have no evidence to dictate otherwise,” Yorke said.

Laurie Murray remains hopeful that her daughter will return home.

“She’s very bubbly, well liked, everybody loves her,” she said. “Everyone is praying, all over the world. We’ll never give up hope. We just want her home safe.”

On Sunday, May 2, a circle of hope vigil was held at the Hanson-Whitman high school track, in a community that has been very supportive to the Murray search. Circles of hope will also be conducted in Ohio, where the parents of Murray’s boyfriend live, and in North Carolina, where her sister, Julie, is living.

Maura’s 22nd birthday was yesterday and with Mother’s Day on Sunday, Laurie Murray said day-to-day coping is very hard.

“I will never give up hope,” she said. “I have my ups and downs, but I have to be strong for her.”

Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Maura Murray should contact the New Hampshire State Police at 603-271-3636.

September 8, 2004

**“UMass Student Still Missing Since Winter”**

**By Dan O'Brien, Collegian Staff**

For the parents of many University of Massachusetts students, the start of the school year marks the beginning of a separation period, at least until the holidays. But while some parents are lingering on their child's last goodbye hug, the family of one UMass student is still trying to piece together the disappearance of their daughter from the University campus last winter.

22-year-old Maura Murray, a nursing student, is still missing after 7 months. It was February 9, 2004 when the Hanson, Mass. resident packed up her belongings from her Kennedy Hall dorm room, drove her car to New Hampshire and got into a minor car accident. After the accident, she vanished without a trace. She has not been seen or heard from since that cold February evening.

Maura's parents, Laurie and Fred Murray, have said all along that her daughter had excellent grades. Murray was a Dean's list student a track star in high school, and a close friend to many.

Murray has described her daughter's relationship with her boyfriend, Army Lt. Bill Rauch of Oklahoma as “a very, very good relationship.” However, Maura's family and friends suspect foul play was involved in the young woman's disappearance.

Events leading up to her disappearance

There are clues indicating that Maura Murray may have had some personal troubles just before she left UMass.

Maura allegedly left her campus job the Thursday before she disappeared and co-workers described her state as upset and troubled, according to WCVB-TV.

In an interview with WCVB-TV, Maura's older sister, Kathleen Murray of Hanover, Mass., admitted that she had a phone conversation with Maura that evening.

“It was just a regular phone call. It made no difference to me. It was just Maura calling me, that was that. I told her about my day and quarreling with my fiancé.

January 26, 2005

**“Missing Student’s Parents Angry Over Police Investigation”**

**By Dan O'Brien, Collegian Staff**

It has been almost one year since University of Massachusetts junior Maura Murray vanished without a trace. As her family and friends continue to hope and pray for her safe return, they have also expressed anger with the New Hampshire State Police who allegedly botched the investigation.

The 21-year-old nursing student from Hanson, Mass. packed up her belongings in her Kennedy Hall dorm room on February 9, 2004. In recent months, the Murray family has discovered that police have made several critical errors in the investigation, and allegedly lied to the news media.

At approximately 7 p.m. on Feb. 9th, Maura was driving on route 112 in Haverhill, NH, police said. As she was trying to negotiate a curve, her car slid off the road.

According to witnesses, after the crash Maura appeared to be frightened, but physically unharmed. A passing school bus driver stopped and asked Maura if she needed help, but she refused saying she had already called “Triple A” from her cell phone. However, there was no cell phone service in that area. The bus driver said he drove a short distance to his home and called police, but Maura had left the scene before they arrived. It appeared as if she had disappeared into the cold night.

Neither the New Hampshire State Police nor Haverhill, NH Police questioned anybody who lived in the vicinity of where Maura was last seen until 36 hours after her disappearance. This is just one in a series of critical errors that that has angered the Murray family.

In a June interview with WCVB-TV, the police officer in charge of the investigation, Lt. John Scarinza of the New Hampshire State Police, Troop F, claimed that authorities had found a note in Maura’s dorm room that she had wrote to her boyfriend, Army Lt. Billy Rausch of Ohio, indicating troubles in their relationship.

“Sometime between Sunday and Monday morning, she packed up all her belongings in her dorm room, to include taking all her pictures off the walls, taking everything out of her bureaus, [and] put them all in boxes [and] left [them] on her bed,” Scarinza told WCVB-TV, “[She] left a personal note to her boyfriend on top of the boxes.”

Maura’s mother, Laurie Murray, told the Daily Collegian in August that the relationship between her daughter and Rausch was a “very, very good relationship.”

Rausch’s mother, Sharon Rausch, reiterated that statement in a recent interview. She said there was a point where the couple’s relationship was rocky in the spring of 2002, but they had resolved their problems by summer and had a good relationship since then.

Her son arrived at Maura’s dorm room with police just two days after she went missing. He said there was no recent letters to him from Maura that were found.

“There is no note,” Sharon Raush said.



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Maura's father, Fred Murray, sent a letter to New Hampshire Governor Craig Benson on May 21, 2004 asking him to persuade State Police to receive assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the search for his daughter. Murray never received a response.

Since then, Murray has applied for a Freedom of Information Act in order to receive more information about the investigation.

"After writing to the governor, I appealed again to the attorney general and the district attorney of Grafton County, but I don't expect anything," Murray said.

Murray has been traveling to New Hampshire to search for his daughter almost every weekend since her disappearance.

"This place is like the old west," Murray said as he described the atmosphere of Northern New Hampshire.

Murray said part of his search has included hanging out in local bars in hopes to overhear a conversation in which someone mentions something about Maura. Murray said he has been actively investigating his daughter's disappearance himself because he does not trust the police to conduct a proper investigation.

"These guys can't catch a cold," he said.

Murray said his main frustration is that police refuse to investigate "scenario number 4." Lt. Scarniza told the Daily Collegian in August that the police investigation has led them to believe Maura "left on her own volition." This would lead one to believe Maura either ran away, committed suicide, or suffered from hypothermia. The Murrays disagreed and believe she was abducted.

Fred Murray believes the police do not want to admit there is a predator in their small, rural community.

"There's a bad guy on their turf in their backyard," Murray said. "The skunk is on their doorstep."

While the Murray family has been disputing facts about the police investigation, yet another troubling piece of information came to light in October 2004 when Sharon Rausch was reviewing Maura's cell phone records. The cell phone was given to Maura by her boyfriend, which was purchased in his mother's name. Rausch came across the last two numbers Maura called three hours before she disappeared.

The first number was to a UMass Amherst dormitory. The number appeared to be a dead end for investigators because the person who lived there likely moved on.

Rausch decided to call the second number, which was to Dominic and Linda Salamone of Wakefield, Mass. In the course of Raush's conversation with Linda Salamone, she claims that she realized the Salamones own a condo in Bartlett, NH — the same condo association the Murray family vacationed in years past.

Although the phone call was one of the last Maura made before she went missing, the Salamones said police never once contacted them. The couple did not learn of their part of the story until being contacted by Rausch, eight months after Maura vanished.

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“I was speechless,” Rausch recalled, “and that doesn’t happen to me very often.”

Fred Murray explained that this new information is another piece of evidence that points to Maura being abducted.

“She had a destination,” Murray said. “She was on route 112, which goes right to Bartlett... [The police] will do anything to avoid saying ‘number 4.’”

This new information does not back up the NH State Police theory that Maura ran away or committed suicide because it would be unlikely for her to rent a condo if she was planning on running away. Before she left UMass, she contacted her professors stating there was a death in the family, when there was no such death.

Many people believe she was taking time off from school to deal with the stress of a recent car crash in which she caused \$10,000 worth of damage to her father’s vehicle. In addition, Maura’s school textbooks were found in the vehicle.

Sharon Rausch and Fred Murray have both said they could not be unhappier with the police investigation.

“It’s clear they have their own agenda and it has nothing to do with the truth or finding Maura,” said Rausch.

More bad news hit the Murray family this past October. Maura’s mother, Laurie Murray was diagnosed with throat cancer. According to Rausch, she has already undergone 30 days of chemotherapy and radiation treatment and has been doing better. Rausch said Murray has told people she is going to beat the cancer so she can see Maura come home.

The Daily Collegian has made several attempts to contact New Hampshire State Police for information regarding this article, but calls were not returned.

Rausch asks anyone who would like to help keep hope for Maura to pray, wear a blue ribbon, or light an electric- or battery-operated candle until she comes home.

On their official Web site, New Hampshire State Police have asked anyone with information regarding Maura’s disappearance to call Sgt. Robert Bruno at 603-846-3333. The Murray family asks those with information to either call police or contact them through their “Maura’s Missing” Web site at <http://www.mauramurray.com>

January 31, 2006

**“New Developments in Search for Missing UMass Student”**

**By Morgan-ann Rousseau, Collegian Staff**

Almost two years after her disappearance, University of Massachusetts Amherst students can still see flyers posted around town, the word “Missing” printed above Maura Murray’s now-familiar face.

Her story remains at a grisly stand-still as her family voices disappointment with New Hampshire authorities.

The 21-year-old nursing student disappeared on Feb. 9, 2004 after leaving her dorm room in Kennedy Hall at UMass and heading through New Hampshire. Maura’s parents suspected foul play from the beginning, yet many investigators still say Maura ran away, or took her own life.

Prior to her disappearance, Maura withdrew \$280 from an ATM and e-mailed her professors to tell them she was going home for the week because of a death in the family, although there had been no death.

Around 7 p.m. that evening, she crashed her car into a snow bank on Route 112 in New Hampshire, several miles from the Vermont border. Police say a witness offered help, but Maura refused and told the witness not to call police. The witness also told officials that she seemed to be intoxicated, but uninjured. When emergency workers arrived, Maura had vanished, and most of her belongings were left behind in the car.

Police said they see no evidence of foul play after searching the scene of Maura’s minor car accident on Route 112 in Haverhill, N.H. However Maura’s parents feel that investigators should take a fresh look in efforts to recover their daughter. The Murray family feels police do not take seriously the possibility that Maura may have been abducted.

Maura’s father, Fred Murray, met with Gov. John Lynch last year to ask for his help in getting records of the investigation. Since then, Murray has sued Lynch, state police and other law enforcement agencies in the hope of obtaining information from the investigation, such as accident reports, an inventory of items taken from her car, a copy of her computer hard drive, and a surveillance tape from a liquor store where she made a purchase.

The lawsuit claims that Murray was denied this information because the records are confidential, and their release would constitute an invasion of privacy.

On Thursday, a New Hampshire judge ruled against Murray in the lawsuit.

“Release of the records could jeopardize the investigation and lead to, among other things, destruction of evidence, intimidation of witnesses and loss of communications with entities providing confidential information,” wrote Grafton Superior Judge Timothy Vaughn in his ruling.

Police have said that they talk with Murray on a regular basis when new leads appear. However, Murray says that he hasn’t gotten any feedback from the governmental investigators in several months. This leads the family to wonder if the investigation into Maura’s disappearance is ongoing.

The idea that Maura could still be in danger is the most compelling reason for disclosing the information because it could aid in locating her, according to the suit.

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Though investigators might write off this notion because it is based on a “gut feeling,” Murray insists that he knew his daughter too well to believe that she would go missing on her own accord. He believes it more likely that she was the victim of foul play.

Skepticism of the New Hampshire authorities’ fortitude in finding their daughter has led the family to take the investigation under their wings as best they can. Along with continually searching the wooded area where Murray disappeared, Fred Murray has gone in search of clues in the area’s local bars, hoping to overhear any information that could lead him in the right direction.

Additionally, licensed private detectives took on the case, thanks to the Molly Bish Foundation, which has partnered with the Licensed Private Detectives Association of Massachusetts. Since last year, the program has offered free investigative services to the unsolved cases of missing women, some of which date back to 1984.

The new private investigations intend to re-examine the angles of Maura’s case, and re-interview everyone involved.

There is also new publicity being focused on Maura’s disappearance, which might lead to a greater public outreach and efforts to help her safe recovery. ABC newsmagazine “20/20” will feature Maura’s case next month.

A Web site being maintained for Maura at [www.mauramurray.com](http://www.mauramurray.com) says that a \$40,000 reward is being offered for any information that might help Maura’s safe return.

Maura had transferred to UMass from the U.S. Military Academy after spending three semesters at West Point. She was on the roster of the UMass women’s track and field team and worked in a local art gallery. Friends and family described her as a quiet woman who didn’t mingle much with classmates.

September 19, 2019

**“The Mystery of Maura Murray, 15 Years Later”**

**By Abigail Charpentier, News Editor**

Despite disappearing over 15 years ago, little progress has been made on the case involving University of Massachusetts student Maura Murray, who vanished without a trace.

On Monday, Feb. 9, 2004, the 21-year-old nursing student born in Hanson, Massachusetts packed up her dorm room, withdrew money from her bank account, contacted her professors to let them know she would be missing that week’s classes due to a death in the family (there was no death in the family) and headed north for the White Mountains in her black 1996 Saturn.

That day’s accident report from the Haverhill, New Hampshire police states that at 7:27 p.m., Murray crashed her car into a tree on Wild Ammonoosuc Road in Woodsville, N.H.

Police were notified of the accident at 7:35 p.m. and arrived on the scene at 7:45 p.m. The officer who filled out the report explains “evidence at the scene indicated the vehicle had been eastbound and had gone off the roadway, struck some trees, spun around and come to rest facing the wrong way in the eastbound lane.”

The windshield had been cracked and damage was done to the driver’s side, front end, front passenger side, rear driver’s side and rear passenger side of the vehicle.

When investigating, police found the car locked and with the driver nowhere in sight.

One witness who spoke to the police said there was a young female behind the wheel with no one else in the vehicle. Despite being told by the driver not to notify the authorities, he called anyways.

“In plain sight behind the driver’s seat of the vehicle I could see a box of Franzia Wine. I could also see red liquid on the driver’s side door and ceiling of the car,” the officer writes in the report.

Before the car was towed by Lavoie’s AutoCare Center, the officer recovered a Coke bottle “that contained a red liquid with a strong alcoholic odor.”

An ambulance arrived at 7:56 p.m. and the EMS and fire personnel, along with a resident of the area, searched the roadway and surrounding area, but had no luck finding the driver. In a later search of the vehicle, it was confirmed the driver was Murray.

The Boston Globe published an article six days after she disappeared and stated, “tracking dogs, helicopters and trained searchers, local and state police, as well as state fish and game officials, covered nearly 20 miles along Route 112, but found no trace of Murray’s footprints in the snow. The tracking dogs lost her scent within 100 feet of the accident, leading investigators and her loved ones to believe she either hitched a ride and continued on her way, or was abducted.”

The blue-eyed, brown-haired woman standing 5-foot-7 was last seen in jeans and a dark colored coat. Since that night, the complicated case has yet to be solved. Murray’s background and events leading up to the night only muddy the waters.

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Murray was born on May 4, 1982 to Fredrick and Laurie Murray. She grew up to become a track star at Whitman-Hanson Regional High School. She then studied chemical engineering at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point before transferring to UMass three semesters later and switching her field of study to nursing.

She first ran into trouble in Amherst in November 2003 when she was arrested for improper use of a credit card under \$250. In the Amherst Police logs from that time, a woman called and reported an unknown subject had used her credit card to make purchases at various restaurants and stores in town, adding she didn't know if she had lost that card or if it was stolen.

In the case's narrative, the officer explained he had been able to track down the purchases on the card to Murray. When confronted and asked how she received the card number, she admitted she had noted the number at the bottom of a receipt and copied it down on a notecard.

WCVB states Murray's charge was dismissed soon after due to good behavior.

Two days before her disappearance, on Saturday, Feb. 7, Fred visited Maura, his daughter, to buy her a new car. Fred details the events of the day in a statement to the UMPD, explaining how he arrived on campus around 12 p.m., drove to Hadley and Northampton in search of a new vehicle with Maura, came back to the Quality Inn where he was staying and went to dinner at Amherst Brewing Company, which has since been taken over by the Hangar Bar & Grill.

At around 9 p.m., Maura and Fred went to pick up Kate, a friend of Maura's from a parking lot on campus. The three of them went back to ABC and had drinks upstairs. They then stopped at Liquors 44 before the girls dropped Fred off at the Quality Inn.

According to Maura, she had gone out to a party and on her way home, she crashed her father's car. She claimed she went around the corner, hit some sand and skid, and stated that she hadn't drank in a while. She never received a ticket or a breathalyzer test.

The car was towed and she made it back to the Quality Inn, where she spent the night. Fred then rented a car and dropped her back off on campus, Sunday afternoon at around 1:30 p.m.

The next evening, the crash in New Hampshire happened and Maura wasn't seen again.

The case of Maura Murray has spread across the Internet and has been investigated by many. The more internet sleuths becoming invested, the more theories are created and more facts are brought into consideration.

Murray made headlines once again in April 2019 when New Hampshire Associate Attorney General Jeffrey Strelzin announced a home in Woodsville, New Hampshire would be searched for her remains. The home near the scene of Murray's car crash had the concrete from the basement area removed, and the search turned up empty.

"We did contact the homeowners and they graciously allowed us, gave us consent, to search the home ... (They found) absolutely nothing other than a small piece of what looks to be pottery and maybe old piping," Strelzin said, according to a MassLive article.

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“Strelzin said investigators searched the basement area where ground-penetrating radar, financed by private citizens, had detected a disturbance last November,” states a Boston Globe report.

“This one hurts, because I thought we finally had it,” Fred said in the article. “This one is worse than the other false alarms and dead ends. I was pretty sure.”

Other efforts have been made in recent years, including a GoFundMe. The “Find Maura Murray” page was created May 7, 2018 and has raised over \$10,000. The proceeds raised will go toward technology, like the ground-penetrating radar, on areas of interest.

The money raised also goes toward a reward for people who can provide information about the disappearance.

“With confirmation by the police that this person has indeed provided information leading to Maura, we will give them the money, as is standard protocol. If it is not claimed in two years we will donate it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children,” the fundraiser’s organizer Maggie Freleng said on the page.

If anyone has information regarding Maura Murray’s disappearance or whereabouts, the New Hampshire Division of State Police can be reached at (800) 852-3411 or (603) 846-3333 or by e-mail at [missingpersons@safety.state.nh.us](mailto:missingpersons@safety.state.nh.us).

As Freleng states on the GoFundMe, “Someone knows something.”

Editor’s notes: A previous version of this story stated Murray hit someone and skid on her crash on Feb. 8.

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