

Beat: News

Missouri coach charged with kidnapping, murder of 10-year-old girl

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USPA News - The body of a 10-year-old Missouri girl was found early Wednesday inside the home of a local school employee, who has been arrested and charged with her kidnapping and murder. Police booked 45-year-old Springfield Public Schools employee Craig Michael Wood into the Greene County jail on alleged charges of first-degree murder at approximately 11:30 p.m. local time on Tuesday, according to the Greene County Sheriff's Department. Springfield Superintendent of Schools Dr. Norm Ridder released a statement confirming that Wood would not be returning to work as a coach or teacher's aide until after the case has been solved. The suspect in this case, Craig Michael Wood, was arrested by Springfield Police Department.

Wood has been employed by SPS since Aug. 18, 1998. He works as a paraprofessional and athletic coach at Pleasant View K-8 School, Ridder said. His employment has been suspended until this matter is resolved. Witnesses reported seeing the abduction in Springfield at 5 p.m. local time on Tuesday. [Witnesses] had observed a vehicle circling the neighborhood, Springfield Police Department Police Chief Paul Williams said in a press conference on Wednesday. They had also observed our victim and they at some point observed the vehicle pull up and the driver have a conversation with the young girl. She initially ignored and then came back and spoke with the driver at which time he suddenly jumped out and grabbed her and pulled her into the vehicle. Chief Williams acknowledged that witnesses were vital in the process of identifying the suspect. A couple of witnesses who observed it chased the vehicle on foot, Williams said. Someone else actually got into a car and tried to chase, follow the vehicle, and lost it while calling 911 and getting us to respond. Witnesses were able to obtain the suspect's license plate number and provide descriptions of the vehicle to police officials. Authorities were able to use the license plate number to locate vehicle registration information on the car the suspect was driving. This eventually led police to Wood's residence. Wood was taken in for questioning at approximately 8:30 p.m. local time on Tuesday when he arrived at his residence in the vehicle that witnesses had identified as the gold Ford Ranger the suspect had been driving at the time of the abduction. The body of 10-year-old Hailey Owens had not been found at that time. A search of the area resulted in the discovery of evidence related to the Owens case. Police officials were granted a search warrant at approximately 2:15 am local time on Wednesday. 30 Springfield Police Department officers and a team of FBI investigators conducted a search of the home shortly after they received the search warrant. The body of a young girl was found at approximately 2:40 am, but police could not confirm at that time whether or not the body belonged to the abducted girl. At 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday, police confirmed that the body was that of Hailey Owens. Police Chief Williams said that police have no idea regarding motivation for the kidnapping or murder. Chief Williams called the incident tragic and offered this advice to parents: I always encourage parents to be vigilant all the time anyway. This just should help people realize they need to heighten their awareness. It can happen to anyone, anywhere in the blink of an eye. It's not something we like to admit, and it's certainly something I'd like to be able to prevent, but the fact that [you have to] protect your kids the best you can is what I think everyone needs to be aware of.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1911/missouri-coach-charged-with-kidnapping-murder-of-10-year-old-girl.html>

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