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Shaniya's dad to speak at program

Story

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Posted: Tuesday, June 1, 2010 12:00 am

Nick Needham Staff writer

The father of 5-year-old Shaniya Davis is expected to return to Cumberland County next week to speak at an awareness program in remembrance of his slain daughter.

Bradley Lockhart and the nonprofit group GOTDAD will serve as hosts of a day of activities and events scheduled for June 12 and aimed at bringing awareness to violence and sexual crimes against children.

The event is being called Shaniya Speaks Day, Keeping the Promise. It will be at the John D. Fuller Sr. Recreational Complex on Old Bunce Road.

Joe McGee is founder of GOTDAD — Giving Opportunities Through Dedication And Devotion — a nonprofit organization that helps busy fathers figure out how to spend more time with their children. He said the day was chosen because Shaniya would have celebrated her sixth birthday June 14.

"Keeping the promise was the message from Brad at her funeral," McGee said. "We want to keep our pledge and take Shaniya's message to the streets."

Lockhart, 39, who moved to Alabama a couple of months after his daughter's death, is expected to be in town for the events.

Shaniya was reported missing on the morning of Nov. 10 by her mother, Antoinette Davis.

Video surveillance at a Sanford motel recorded 29-year-old Mario Andrette McNeill getting in an elevator with Shaniya in his arms.

Six days later, her body was found in woods off Walker Road in Lee County.

Davis, 25, is out on bail awaiting trial on charges of human trafficking and child abuse involving prostitution after investigators say she sold her child into sex slavery to pay off a debt.

McNeill is charged with first-degree murder and first-degree rape of a child. He is being held at Central Prison in Raleigh awaiting trial.

McGee said he doesn't want to open old wounds. Instead, he wants to bring the community closer through awareness and empowerment.

The number of child abuse and neglect reports were up 46 percent in Cumberland County for March, according to data from the county Department of Social Services.

"A sad thing is happening in our community," McGee said. "We need to come together to discuss how we can stop this from happening to our children."

The event will include live bands and guest speakers, information booths on health issues, rape prevention, child abuse and home safety.

"We want to show people that they don't have to depend on the system for support," McGee said. "We need to support each other."

The program, where Lockhart will speak, is at 4 p.m. Lockhart's message will be of reinforcement and personal responsibility, McGee said.



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INTERACT

Lockhart has established a foundation, Shaniya [Speaks.org](#), with the money raised in the wake of Shaniya's death. It is dedicated to raising awareness about child abuse.

"People are too quick to mind their own business in our society," McGee said. "It's time we started being our brother's keeper again."

Photo: Bradley Lockhart

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