

**"One tip" could solve brutal murder
of Rockford woman**

by **BETH ALTENA**

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A CLUE TO CATCH A KILLER -
Friends of Renee Pagel and
detectives on the case hope
someone will come forward with
information that will help in the
conviction of her murderer.



CALL FOR HELP - This flyer, posted on Renee Pagel's mailbox, is one of few that have not been torn down.

Posters asking for help are torn down

Friends of a Courtland Township woman who was brutally murdered four months ago are still looking for the witness who could close the case and bring her killer to justice. They are frustrated that reward posters bearing a picture of Renee Pagel are being removed as soon as they are put up.

Pagel was stabbed to death in her own bed in her home on 9050 13 Mile Road, on August 5. Pagel, mother of a three-year-old and a pair of seven-year-old twins, worked for Kent Career Technical Center as a health teacher.

She was killed the day after she came home from the hospital after donating a kidney to the father of one of her students. It was also days before her divorce from husband Michael Pagel was to become final. According

to friend Chris Crandle, the generous act was indicative of Pagel's personality.

"She was so selfless. Here she was going through this horrible divorce and yet she would offer to do this for someone else," Crandle said. "She had so many friends, made such an impact on people, it didn't matter if you knew her three months or 30 years, she was incredible."

Crandle is one of a group of people who meet monthly to remember Renee and to pray. They mourn the loss of their friend and hope their prayers will reach her children who no longer live in Rockford. They also wait for Renee's killer to be arrested and share updates on how the investigation is progressing.

Crandle trusts that the Kent County Sheriff Department investigators are doing all they can, but hopes someone will come forward with new information that will help in the case. "Let's bring the truth out," she said.

Laminated flyers with Pagel's picture, an offer of reward money and the a number to reach Detective E.J. Johnson have been posted in Rockford in the hopes someone will see them and contact authorities. However, the flyers have been torn down from many of their locations. The volunteers who put them up are frustrated. One claims to have been contacted by an officer from outside the Kent County Sherrif Department accusing her of insensitivity regarding the feelings of Pagel's three children.

"If they think this is harming the children, I'd say what's harming the children was having their mother brutally taken from them," Crandle countered. "This shows how many people loved their mother, how many people still care and are thinking

of her and want her killer caught. Our hearts are with these kids. They have been plucked from their home, community and all of their friends. They have not been allowed to see or contact anyone who loves them or loved their mother."

Joyce Schaner has been Renee Pagel's best friend for more than 30 years. She is determined to follow the case through until justice is done and the killer is caught. Schaner and others have posted over 50 of the flyers hoping more information will come to light.

"One person out there who has one tip could make all the difference. They might not realize how important their information is," Schaner commented.

"Even though someone is taking the posters down, it just inspires us to keep putting them back up," Schaner stated.

Schaner said she and Pagel met as young women just out of high school. She said she and Pagel talked by phone every day and she has been in close contact with investigators throughout the case.

Detective Johnson said the department appreciates the efforts of Pagel's friends and hope the flyers will encourage someone to call. "It just shows that there are people out there who care about Renee and they are trying to help us as much as we are trying to help them. It's nice to keep it in the media and remind people we are still working it."

Johnson said Pagel's husband is considered a person of interest in the case and has not been helpful during the investigation. "He hasn't been at all cooperative. He won't give us an alibi or anything like that... We have looked in all directions [for suspects] and have come up with only one direction."

Television and print media have followed the case, and in October the file was accidentally released to reporters. Supposed to be sealed during the investigation, the file was handed over due to human error. Among other things, it revealed that authorities felt a break-in at Pagel's home prior to her murder was not a robbery. In the incident, photographs and divorce documents were removed from Pagel's home.

It was reported that the judge in the Pagel divorce was granting custody of the couple's three children to Renee and ordering Michael to pay \$1,000 a month in child support. He was allegedly advised to get a better job to pay for the support.

Kent County Sheriff Lt. Roger Parent said the case is still very much under active investigation. "Detectives are still doing interviews, still waiting on forensic tests," he stated. "This in no way at all becoming a cold case. It is still a fresh, active investigation."

Friends of Renee Pagel have committed to raising \$900 to sponsor a day of programming on 91.3 WCSG, a Christian radio station, in her honor. The sponsorship day is July 29, which is her birthday. If anyone is interested in contributing to WCSG toward this pledge in honor of Renee, they may send their

checks to WCSG, 1001 E. Beltline Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49502-5023. It must be identified as July 29 Day Sponsor. Donations are tax-deductible and a receipt will be issued by WCSG.

Crandal and friends hope media attention may result in the lead that helps investigators make an arrest. They hope someone saw something around the time of Renee Pagel's murder or in the days before. Those with information are asked to contact Silent Observer at (616) 774-2345 or Officer Johnson at (616) 632-6135. "I have every confidence this case will continued to be worked," Johnson said. "God willing we will make an arrest."