

# Neighbors grapple with guilt after girl suffers abuse



Witnesses in the Kyra Wine abuse case, Valerie Goin and Norma Mabbutt rely on each other to deal with the guilt they feel. - Ralph Bartholdt

**By Ralph Bartholdt**

Published: Tuesday, March 24, 2009 4:10 PM PDT

Could have. Would have. Should have. It is a buzz in their heads.

"I should have seen it," said Valerie Goin. "I should have done more."

Her friend and neighbor Norma Mabbutt comforts her with the words that the women often tell each other. "It's not your fault," says Mrs. Mabbutt.

The two women are witnesses in the Kyra Wine case.

Kyra was 3 last year when she was found near death in the home her mother Christina Haynes, 27, shared with boyfriend Charlie Smith.

As a result of her injuries, physicians amputated her feet and part of a finger.

Her sister Amanda, 5, was unharmed. Both girls are living with their grandparents.

Smith, 29, was sentenced last week to 10 years in prison for failing to seek medical help for the child who lay as long as two weeks in bed clutching to life. Doctors aren't sure what caused the large scars on her head and buttocks, or why the flesh at her extremities blackened and died.

The women, though, for months before the June 17 arrest of Smith and Haynes watched for signs of neglect and abuse among the two little girls.

They notified authorities, but nothing was done, they said.

They told friends as well, but it was a call placed to police that finally brought authorities to the residence where Kyra was found last June.

It was the signs, the second guessing, and their own apprehensions that they relive now, wishing they had done more.

The women's experiences are similar to those of other witnesses in criminal cases, especially abuse, or murder cases, said Terri Sudol, a counselor in Kootenai County who has patients

referred to her by the county's victim-witness unit.

"They are probably feeling a lot of guilt and regret," said Ms. Sudol. "They are taking it personally."

Most of the patients that are referred by the Kootenai County prosecutor's office are victims, she said, but at times she has counseled witnesses as well.

"It is common for people to seek treatment after they have been through something that traumatic," she said.

Benewah County does not have a counseling program for witnesses or victims, referring them instead to state programs.

The Kootenai County victim and witness unit makes referrals but patients must pay themselves, or tap their insurance provider.

The state's victim compensation fund provides money for therapy, but it primarily targets victims, said Nancy Lee of the Kootenai County victim-witness department.

Mrs. Mabbutt sought help from the state to pay for counseling, but quit the therapy sessions after her money ran out.

When she seeks counseling now, she relies on her friend.

"You wake up and have bad dreams, or you see a girl with hair like Amanda's, or see a girl wearing clothes like Kyra wore...", said Mrs. Goin. "I don't want them to blame me. I blame myself enough."

Mrs. Mabbutt thinks it will get easier after the case is adjudicated.

Christina Haynes is still awaiting her arraignment pending a second psychological evaluation.

"I just wish it would get done and over with," said Mrs. Mabbutt.

Even then, though, the memories and guilt will need to be put to rest.

"People need support," said Mrs. Goin.