



Oct 21, 2004

- [Front Page](#)
- [Campus](#)
- [Life & Leisure](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Local & State](#)
- [Nation & World](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [About The UD](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Ad Rates](#)
- [Student Pub](#)
- [Texas Tech](#)
- [Student Affairs](#)
- [Archives](#)

Local & State



Rogers

Search continues for missing Lubbock teenager

by Lorraine Railsback
June 02, 2004

The search for 16-year-old Joanna Kathryn Rogers continues into its fourth week with few leads, despite a 500-person manhunt through the surrounding area, an Amber Alert and the entrance of cadaver dogs.

According to the Lubbock County Sheriff's Department, she was last seen on at 12:20 a.m. on May 4 when she returned home from her job at a local sandwich shop. She had a brief conversation with her mother before retiring to her room. At 7 a.m., there was no trace of Joanna. Her mother immediately contacted local authorities and a regional Amber Alert was issued on May 6.

No sign of forced entry was reported, and the family's two dogs were not alerted to any intruders. Rogers' belongings - debit card, keys, shoes, clothes and cell phone - were left in her room, according to officials.

County authorities have analyzed both Rogers' and her mother's computer hard drives. They also have interviewed friends, coworkers, her boyfriend and anyone else who might have information of her whereabouts.

In the following weeks, an extensive search has taken place in Lubbock and surrounding areas. Volunteers from as far as Fort Worth have come to help find missing Rogers. Captain Bill Drewell of the Lubbock County Sheriff's Department says the most recent volunteer search on May 15 and 16 covered a 10-mile radius from Rogers' home.

The United Response Search and Rescue Team, an organization involved in 30 searches during the past year with an 87 percent recovery rate, took part in the search as well. The organization is working on the case daily and is focusing on Rogers' daily patterns and routines to find more information. Dana Ames, co-founder and director of operations, said this case is different from most on which she has worked.

"It certainly is a rarity because we don't know if we are dealing with an abduction by a friend, family member, or stranger," Ames said. "There are very little clues as to who is involved."

Even so, she says the support of the Lubbock community allows her to

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remain hopeful that Rogers will be found soon. Typically, most searches for missing persons involve 70 to 200 community volunteers. Lubbock, with some 500 volunteers, has been the largest voluntary response that she has ever witnessed.

"I am blown away by the support of the Lubbock community and the undying commitment that has been given by the Sheriff's Department," Ames said.

Currently, there is not another public search planned that volunteers can participate in. However, Drewell said there are many other ways in which the community can help.

"It is important for everyone in Lubbock and surrounding areas to be as aware as possible of their surroundings and to take note of any changes," Drewell said.

Specifically, he asks farmers to check their vacant fields and merchants check any empty storage units or buildings on their property. It also is important to notice any significant changes in the level of traffic coming and going from local businesses and residences.

"Most importantly, people should know that they can call the Sheriff's Department anytime and that their call will be completely confidential," Drewell said.

Any information that could assist authorities should be reported to the Lubbock County Sheriff's Department at (806) 775-1601.



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