

Nonprofit holds vigil for Brittane Drexel



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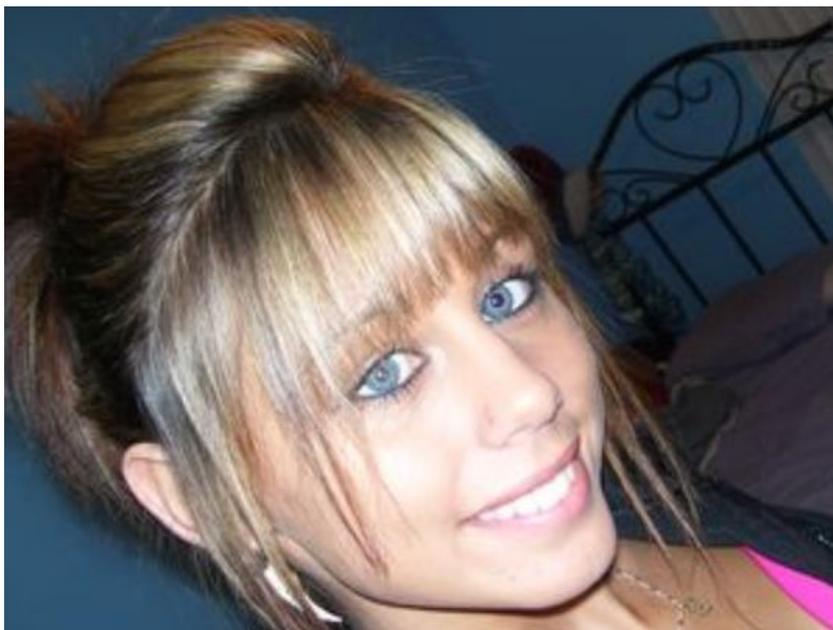
(Photo: SARAH TADDEO/@sjtaddeo/Staff photographer)

Area residents gathered Sunday to remember Brittane Drexel, a Chili teen who disappeared in 2009 and who the FBI believes is dead.

Women working with Angels of Mercy (<http://www.angelsofmercyny.org/>) — a local nonprofit helping women in need or who've been victims of trafficking or violence — organized the Sunday vigil to "put a face to the problem" of trafficking around the U.S. A small group of people gathered on the sidewalk outside the nonprofit's North Winton Road location and lit candles, recited scripture and shared words of solidarity and encouragement.

"We would like the community and her family to know that there are people out there who care about the root of the problem," said Angels of Mercy president and founder Mary Jo Colligan.

Drexel, who was 17 at the time, disappeared during a spring break trip to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, but the last signal from her phone came from McClellanville, South Carolina, about an hour south of Myrtle Beach. No one has been charged with a crime in connection with her disappearance, but police and federal authorities said in June they had information that led them to believe Drexel was murdered.



Brittane Drexel (Photo: Provided photo)



ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Brittane Drexel: Transcript details homicide claims

(<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2016/08/29/transcript-details-claims-drexel-homicide/89541298/>)

Several informants claimed to know Drexel was killed in McClellanville. Jailhouse informant Taquan Brown claims (</story/news/2016/08/29/transcript-details-claims-drexel-homicide/89541298/>) that Drexel was kidnapped, trafficked for sex, fatally shot, and then dumped in an alligator-infested swamp, according to the transcript of an Aug. 15 federal court hearing in Charleston, South Carolina. Brown is serving 25 years in prison for manslaughter.

"She was a real person, and we can't forget that," said Jennifer Wolfley, outreach coordinator at Angels of Mercy. "These things can't keep happening."

Over 3,600 human trafficking cases in the U.S. had been reported this year to the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/states) (<https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/states>) as of June 2016, through calls, emails and other correspondence via the organization's hotline.

Timothy Da'Shaun Taylor of South Carolina is the focus of the investigation into the possible "kidnapping, human trafficking and murder" of the Chili teen, the [court transcripts](https://www.scribd.com/document/322479867/UNITED-STATES-OF-AMERICA-vs-TIMOTHY-Da-SHAUN-TAYLOR-2-16-CR-480) show. (<https://www.scribd.com/document/322479867/UNITED-STATES-OF-AMERICA-vs-TIMOTHY-Da-SHAUN-TAYLOR-2-16-CR-480>) Taylor was involved in an armed robbery in 2011 and received a sentence of probation at the time, but this year a federal grand jury in Charleston indicted him on a federal criminal charge connected with the robbery.

The Aug. 15 bail hearing was to determine whether Taylor should be free as he awaits trial for the robbery. FBI Special Agent Gerrick Munoz testified that Taylor's suspected role in the Drexel disappearance proves he is dangerous and should not be released. Taylor has denied any involvement.

Drexel's body has not been found.

"We felt we wanted to honor her life, and let the community know we're here," said Colligan.

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[▶ Previous coverage of Brittanee Drexel \(/topic/fb9b77d7-9d00-4a26-af07-8ec35fe01556/brittanee-drexel/\)](/topic/fb9b77d7-9d00-4a26-af07-8ec35fe01556/brittanee-drexel/)

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