



Missing elderly woman found

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Mercury Staff: With files from Vik Kirsch

GUELPH

A massive ground search that was underway for an elderly woman with Alzheimer's yesterday had a happy ending for her family.

Audrey Dingwall, 74, was found alive last night during a grid search at Guelph Lake Sports Fields and taken to hospital.

Dingwall was missing for 29 hours before she was found on the ground in a heavy brush area almost five kilometres from her residence, The Village of Riverside Glen retirement home.

Amanda D'Agostino, 25, was watching a soccer game at a sports field there last night as police searched a nearby bush.

"All of a sudden, they found her in the bushes right beside the sports field," D'Agostino said, estimating the time must have been around 9 p.m.

She knew police were scouring Guelph, having seen a missing-person flyer about Dingwall earlier that day at a north-side photo shop.

People around D'Agostino at the soccer game reacted strongly to the discovery.

"Everybody was: 'Oh, my God, that poor woman,'" she recalled.

Dingwall was brought out of the bush on a stretcher and eased into an ambulance, D'Agostino said.

"She was emotional. She was happy somebody was there. One of the cops was comforting her.

"It was a really nice moment," D'Agostino said.

"Poor thing, she must have been so scared out there."

Guelph Police officers, firefighters, members of the OPP -- who lent the use of their helicopter -- and canine units from Guelph and Waterloo Regional Police and numerous volunteers came out to search for Dingwall.

Eight tactical officers scoured the swamp and dense bush beside The Village of Riverside Glen retirement community early in the morning.

Using long sticks, the officers cleared the bush looking for any clues that might lead to the Riverside Glen resident, who went missing from the retirement home around 5 p.m. Tuesday.

The officers then began searching the area surrounding Riverside Park and worked outwards.

Guelph Police began their search shortly after Dingwall disappeared and wrapped up around 3 a.m. yesterday. At least 25 more officers were called in to begin the search again at 7 a.m.

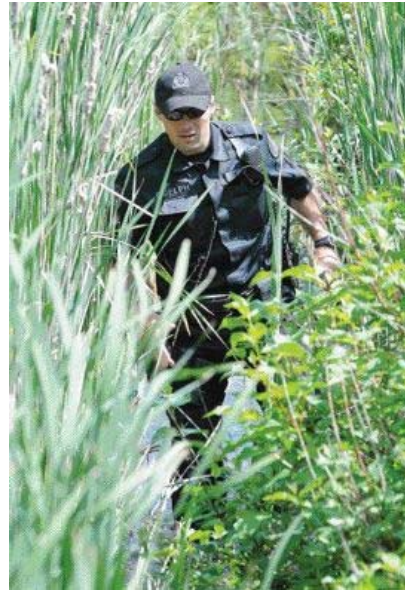
Waterloo Regional Police sent 20 officers to assist in the search by late afternoon. They brought two dogs from their canine unit.

Dingwall suffers from Alzheimer's, which can lead to a confused state, Guelph Police Sergeant Dave Elloway said.

The Guelph Fire Department also had a crew on a boat searching for her along the Speed River, from Woodlawn Road to the footbridge at Riverside Park. Fire officials also scoured the ponds on Highway 6 north, near the Ignatius Jesuit Centre.

Her son, Dave Dingwall, said he drove as far as Fergus searching for his mother, since she spent part of her childhood in Arthur.

With his brother, sister, niece and sister-in-law, Dave Dingwall said he went to their old home on Stevenson Street and their father's former business on Yarmouth Street.



RYAN PFEIFFER, GUELPH MERCURY



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"She loves to walk," he said, adding she'd been found twice walking along the Hanlon Expressway.

The family had a trailer at Sauble Beach, Dingwall's son said, noting she would often go for a 10 to 15 kilometre walk in one evening.

About 40 volunteers gathered at Riverside Park in the late afternoon to help police search for Dingwall.

Many were employees at Cooke and Denison Ltd., Dingwall's husband's former business, as well as friends and family members.

The family was concerned she might have hitched a ride, Dave Dingwall said, adding his mother wouldn't know how to use a bus, but has used cabs.

Nicholaas Bos, a Guelph resident, said he biked through the trails of Riverside Park, heading all the way out to Guelph Lake searching for Dingwall after he heard the news Tuesday night.

Bos didn't know Dingwall, but said his fianc?e's father also suffers from Alzheimer's, so he was moved to help.

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AMANDA D'AGOSTINO, FOR THE GUELPH MERCURY

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