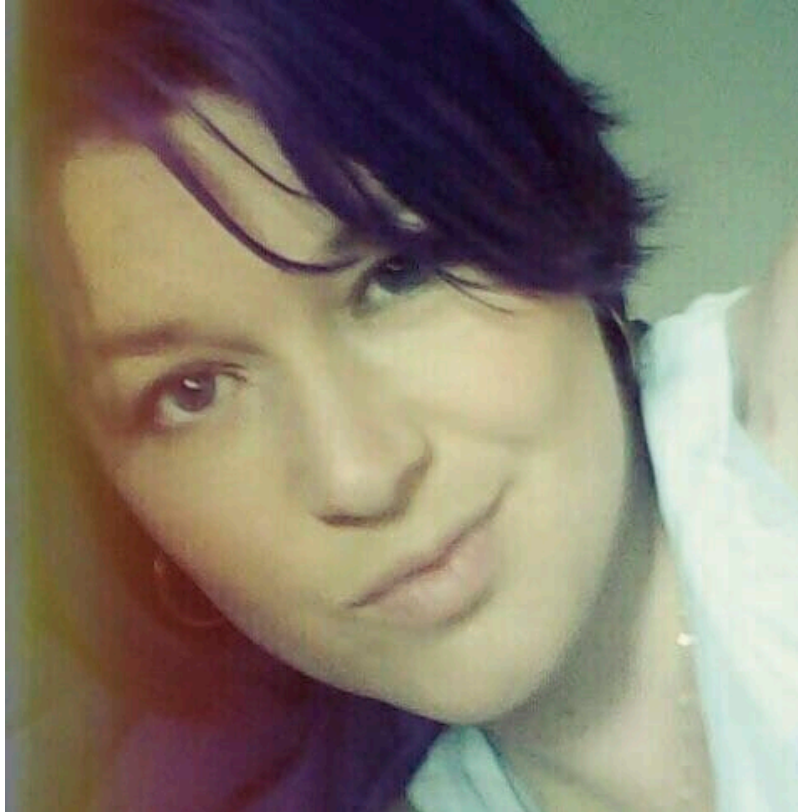


Deputies looking into suspicious death

July 23, 2021



Local law enforcement is calling the death of a 29-year-old Crescent City woman, Tamera Sanders, suspicious after her body was discovered in a barn that burned down on May 2 near the Elk Valley Casino.

“It’s definitely still being treated as a suspicious death, and we are occasionally receiving information from the public. We are investigating every tip that we get,” said Undersheriff Randy Waltz.

According to Waltz, Sanders’ body was not discovered until the day after the fire, when a sheriff’s deputy was able to safely return to the barn at Howland Hill Road and Bertsch Avenue. The deputy found Sanders’ body mostly intact, meaning it was not damaged by the flames.

Since then, the body has been handed over to a forensic pathologist for an autopsy. The autopsy report is not yet final, but Waltz said Sanders’ body showed signs of smoke inhalation, and there were no obvious signs of foul play.

While the DNSO is investigating the suspicious death, CalFire was responsible for looking into the origin of the fire. Recently, CalFire completed their investigation, and handed their final report off to DNSO.

Waltz said the CalFire report was inconclusive.

“The physical evidence of the fire’s cause, and the exact area of origin are undetermined. They did not find evidence of arson,” said Waltz.

Darrel Benoit is a local advocate for the homeless in Del Norte. Benoit and others in the community knew Sanders by an alias, “Magica.” Benoit said he invited Sanders into his home in December of 2020, and allowed her to stay there for a couple of nights. He said he first noticed her wandering through his backyard.

“She seemed like she needed a cup of coffee,” said Benoit.

While Sanders was staying at Benoit’s home, Benoit said she made several strange statements.

“She was questioning her life and I remember her saying, ‘Am I just a Barbie doll?’” said Benoit.

Additionally, she told Benoit she was planning to drink the chemical compound — copper sulfate — which is commonly used to treat lumber. Despite Benoit urging her not to, Sanders drank an unknown amount of the toxic liquid before leaving Benoit’s residence in the middle of the night.

According to her Facebook profile, Sanders had a young son.

If someone has information regarding Sander’s death, they should contact the Del Norte County Sheriff’s Office at 707-464-4191

To submit an anonymous tip via text message, text DNSOTIP and your tip to 847411 (tip411).