

"Acquaintance" held in connection with murder

By Brock Weir

Police investigating the murder of Shirley Lewis-McFarlane in Discovery Bay, Jamaica, have concluded the Aurora resident died of blunt force trauma and strangulation.

As The Auroran went to press this week, police in the Jamaica Constabulary Force confirmed they had someone in custody related to the incident, but would not go as far as to name the individual a suspect.

"We do have someone in custody and the person is awaiting questioning with their attorney," said Assistant Superintendent Tanisha Ellison on Tuesday evening. "The date has not been set as of yet. We believe the person has information connected with the investigation."

On Monday, Deputy Superintendent Steve Brown told The Auroran questioning continued with an "acquaintance" of Ms. Lewis-McFarlane picked up earlier that day. He would not elaborate on the relationship between the person and the victim other than they were "very close."

Ms. Lewis-McFarlane, 53, was found dead in her Discovery Bay home in Jamaica's St. Ann parish on Monday, December 30 with injuries to her body.

Described as a frequent visitor to the island, Jamaican media reported there was no signs of forced entry, but she suffered injuries to her head and face, ranging from bruises to a slit throat. Police say early reports that her throat had been slashed were untrue.

By last Friday, officials with the Constabulary Force told The Auroran police from Kingston were on the ground in St. Ann continuing the investigation.

Little had changed in the investigation by Saturday as police continued conducting interviews in the area.

"Efforts are also being made to locate her husband, whom she is said to have separated from some time ago," said Brown that afternoon.

By Monday, however, the Constabulary had established contact with Ms. Lewis-McFarlane's estranged husband, Carlisle McFarlane, who Ms. Lewis-McFarlane first met in Jamaica in 2001.

Ms. Lewis-McFarlane, a long-time resident of Aurora, had since established her roots in the island nation. Survived by her three children, Jasmine, Amanda, and Shawn, she was also the daughter of former York Regional Police officer Don Lewis, Sr., and predeceased by her mother Joyce, as well as Don Lewis, Jr., also of the York Regional Police.

In a Facebook tribute set up in her mother's memory, daughter Jasmine said the entire situation was surreal.

"I feel like I could just call her and ask her what I should be doing," Jasmine wrote. "Remembrance was very important to her. She would visit grandma's grave and other family who reside in Aurora Cemetery at least once a week, planting new flowers, watering, even tending flowers of strangers that had been neglected.

"She was always amazed at the markers people had and I knew her favourites - the tree, the Empire State Building, the new child's one by the back fence. She knew what was supposed to happen in these situations and she executed these arrangements in military precision. Mom, we'll try to give you everything you would have wanted. You didn't deserve any of what happened, but you deserve a beautiful place to rest. I promise to pick up where you left off."

Added Shawn: "I was close to my mom and I talked to her every day multiple times."

While Jamaican authorities continue their investigation, people here in Canada have reached out to help the family bring Ms. Lewis-McFarlane's remains back home.

An online fund was established Saturday in her memory to help the family bring her home and provide for her funeral. By press time, it had garnered \$395.

“[Her children] are all heartbroken and devastated,” said fundraiser founder Stephanie Dawber-Richards in a statement. “They are preparing for her to be flown back to Canada where they can properly say goodbye to their best friend and mother. This is going to be a long, hard road for them, both emotionally and financially. They are going to need all the help they can get.

“They are such a wonderful family, well-mannered and always had a smile on their faces; they learned this from their warm-hearted, open-armed mother who would do anything for anyone, even give the shirt off her back, even if she needed it. She raised her children to do just that.

“Now it is time that we need to give back to this family, in this time of great need. I would like them to be able to mourn their mother and not have to worry about losing hours at work. I want them to be able to fly their mother home and have a beautiful funeral for her, to have their closure.”

To support the fund, visit www.gofundme.com/61oyeo.

Anyone with information related to the case are asked to call the St. Ann's Bay Crime Office at 876-972-2209 or the Discovery Bay Police at 876-973-2233. No country code is required. Information can also be submitted online at www.crimestop.org.