

Many Ecclesia children still with foster homes

Saturday marks year after girl's death

By Bob Baum
Associated Press

WOODBURN (AP) — A year ago Saturday, members of a religious group brought the body of an 8-year-old girl to a rural fire station. The death of Dayna Broussard set off a child abuse investigation that is far from over.

The next night, 53 Ecclesia Athletic Association children were taken into state custody. Today, 40 remain in foster homes because their parents won't agree to conditions set by

the state Children's Services Division.

"I think this is the only time in America that so many children have been taken into care on such a crisis basis under such horrible circumstances," said Bill Thomas, the agency administrator.

Parents of the children live at a farmhouse near Sandy, east of Portland, where the youngsters were rounded up by state officials 12 months ago. State officials want the adults to admit their children were victims of abuse and to promise that they

won't be abused again.

"We're still working with their parents," Thomas said. "We would like very much to make the kind of commitment that we in Oregon need to hear so their children can be safe."

One parent they haven't worked with is Dayna's father, Eldridge Broussard Jr., the founder of Ecclesia. State officials believe he is in Oregon, but his whereabouts could not be determined this week.

A telephone call to Ecclesia officials for comment was not returned.

On Wednesday, the state officials held a news conference at the juvenile detention center where the children were taken on Oct. 14, 1988.

"Why we are here today is to remember Dayna Broussard and ... to remember that Dayna did not die accidentally. Dayna was brutally, ceaselessly, needlessly beaten to death," Thomas said.

Four adult Ecclesia members were convicted of manslaughter. A fifth member was convicted of criminal mistreatment in connection with other beatings of children.

Several children testified at the trial that they were systematically beaten as part of the group's tough discipline.

They said that Dayna was beaten with an electrical cord, rubber hose, piece of plastic pipe and weightlifting belt as the other children were forced to watch and count the blows.

Eldridge Broussard Jr. appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* after the arrests of Ecclesia members and blamed the media's negative publicity about the group for his daughter's death.

ter's death.

Broussard, a former college basketball player, founded Ecclesia in 1975 at the Watts Christian Center in Los Angeles to steer children away from drugs and crime. He motivated them through discipline and athletics, saying once he wanted to prepare them to compete in the Olympics.

The group came to Oregon in the summer of 1987 and announced plans to cultivate crops and train children for athletic competition.

Since the manslaughter convictions of his associates, Broussard, who was not charged, has kept a low profile.

"He's not had any contact with the caseworker for his family. He hasn't had any contact with me. He hasn't appeared in court hearings. He hasn't been involved in any of the meetings or contacts that we've had," said Bart Wilson.

No criminal wrong found in state penitentiary care

SALEM (AP) — An investigation has turned up no criminal conduct in connection with medical care given to inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary infirmary, an official said Wednesday.

Marion County District Attorney Dale Penn said investigators found no criminal wrongdoing in the care given to an elderly infirmary inmate who was forcibly given an injection of tranquilizer.

Penn also said the investigation came across nothing unusual in the deaths of four inmates who were treated at the infirmary over the past 18

Clackamas County branch manager for the children's services agency.

Broussard's four surviving children are in state custody. He hasn't seen them; his wife has, Wilson said.

The state has spent \$545,000 on the case as of July, and continues to spend about \$10,000 per month for foster care.

Of the 53 children taken by the state, two were returned to the custody of their parents, while 11 others remain under state jurisdiction but live with relatives.

The 40 in foster homes are impatient to reunite with their parents.

"A year to you and I is 10 years to a kid," said caseworker Jerry Huntley. "No one can tell them what will happen tomorrow and that's really difficult for them."

months. "There was no criminal wrongdoing in any of the medical care issues rising out of the infirmary," he said.

Penn said giving inmate Byron Sears, 78, an injection of drugs against his will was justified because he suffered from mental problems and was "unable to control himself" at the time.

"He became a danger to himself," he said.

Penn said the investigation also discounted allegations that Sears' tranquilizer dosage was doubled to prevent him from talking with investigators from the Senior and Disabled Services Division.

In all four cases involving inmates who died, he said, autopsies showed that the prisoners died of natural causes.

"There is no higher death rate in the Oregon State Penitentiary" than in penal institutions in other states, he said.

Appearing at a news conference with Oregon Corrections chief Fred Pearce, Penn said the investigation did turn up nursing practices violations in connection with the care given to the elderly inmate.

He said those included attempts by the infirmary nursing staff to sneak the tranquilizer into Sears' food when he refused to take it and continuing to offer the drug to Sears when infirmary doctors were no longer prescribing it for him.

But those are violations of internal policies and do not involve criminal law, he said.

For his part, Pearce said appropriate disciplinary steps would be taken, although he declined to say what they were.

The corrections director also said his agency has hired a team of consultants to review the prison's health care programs.

The investigation of the infirmary was begun in June by the Senior and Disabled Services Division. Penn described the division's report as a partial investigation, and asked the state police to step in and complete the inquiry.

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