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Hypnosis used to improve recall of accident witness

By Kristina Gleeson, Staff writer

Colona police, using forensic hypnosis, have probed the memory of a witness who saw the license plate of the truck that ran over 9-year-old Ashley Pruett Feb. 1 and then left the scene.

That witness, whom police are not identifying, did not recall the plate number at first, according to Colona Police Officer Michael Spah. However, during the hypnosis, the witness remembered part of the plate number, he added.

"We still do not know the entire registration of the suspect vehicle," Officer Spah said in a written statement. "But (we were) able to gain enough information for nearly a complete registration. Additional vehicle information/description was also obtained through the hypnosis that is critical to our investigations."

Ashley and a friend were playing outside in the Kershaw Trailer Court when she was hit. She suffered internal injuries and underwent surgery to correct a shattered pelvis at St. Francis Hospital in Peoria. She faces more surgery in the future.

Police still believe the truck was a charcoal gray 4 X 4 with a short box, but believe now it is most likely a Chevrolet, he added.

"We originally believed that the truck was a GM product, opening the possibility of the suspect truck being a GMC," Officer Spah said. "Through the hypnosis session, the truck was identified as a Chevrolet by the 'bow-tie' on the front grill.

Based on the new information from the witness, officers requested information from the state about vehicle registrations that might fit the description.

Officers hope to hear from the secretary of state's office within the next few days.

"I am confident the suspect vehicle will be on this list," Officer Spah said in the statement. "...With any luck at all, Colona police will have a definite suspect vehicle the first of next week."

Staff writer Kristina Gleeson

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