

Missing Macks Creek woman found dead

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The News-Leader

HERMITAGE — Investigators today will search for clues along the Little Niangua River, after pulling the body of a missing Macks Creek woman from the waterway late Monday.

Trudy Darby, 42, apparently was killed shortly after being abducted from a Macks Creek convenience store Saturday night, police said.

The cause of death was not immediately known, but police were investigating it as a slaying.

Friends wondered why anyone would kill the longtime Macks Creek resident, described as someone who wouldn't make enemies.

"She was related to half the community, and the other half were her friends," said Debra Hicks, who hired Darby last October as a clerk at K and D Country Corner.

Darby's nude body was spotted in the

water by a Missouri State Highway Patrol helicopter pilot Monday afternoon, and a rescue squad removed the body from the river shortly before 5 p.m., Hickory County Sheriff Ray Tipton said.

The body was found in a stretch of the river just inside Hickory County, near County Road 200 and Route BB, he said. That's about five miles southwest of where Darby was last seen alive.

"From what the evidence showed, I believe she was probably killed in Hickory

County," Tipton said.

Darby's clothes were not found in the immediate vicinity of her body, but Tipton said he didn't know if Darby had been sexually assaulted.

Darby — a former secretary for the Macks Creek Public School — was a night clerk at K and D Country Corners, near U.S. 54 and Missouri 73.

At 10 p.m. Saturday, police say Darby called her son, Waylon, and told him a "strange man" was outside the store.

Darby asked her son to come to the store, but didn't indicate to Waylon that she was frightened or in danger, Camden County Sheriff Ralph Rider said.

Waylon Darby, 22, told police he arrived within five minutes, and she was gone.

"It appears she left quickly — she didn't take her coat or her purse," Rider said.

Missing from the register was the \$220 usually left for the morning crew. Darby had deposited the day's receipts in a safe, Rider said.