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The Clark County Sheriff's Department asked for the community's help last week in locating a missing Charlestown woman.

Stephanie Marie Kirk, 35, was reported missing by her family after she had not contacted them since March 25.

Police held a press conference on Friday, April 20, to ask for the community's help in locating Kirk.

"We were working a missing person's case and following up on leads. After the news conference we received five or six calls, some on the anonymous tip line and some on the office line," stated Detective Donnie Bowyer of the Clark County Sheriff's Department. "One believed they seen her here in Jeff at a bar, one thought they seen her in Kentucky at a Walmart and then we received information that she may be back in New Albany. That is where the investigation started."

Bowyer continued, "We followed up on all the leads as they came in. I wish I could say that was a fast process, but it isn't. The process of following up on leads is a lengthy process. Captain Racheal Lee was assigned the case. The entire division was working the case with all the leads."

Kirk, according to Bowyer, had a history of leaving for several days at a time, but always kept in contact with her family.

"The longer the investigation continues, the hopes of her returning safely goes down," Bowyer stated.

The body of Kirk was located in the back yard of a home in New Albany on Friday evening. The body was positively identified as Kirk on Saturday afternoon.

"I received word on Friday evening that a body had been found in Gibson's back yard. Around midnight I received word that they believed it was Stephanie," Bowyer recalled. "Saturday afternoon they confirmed it was Stephanie Kirk's body found in the back yard."

Kirk's body was found in the back yard of William Clyde Gibson. The 54-year old convicted sex offender has already confessed to the killing of Christine Whitis, 75, last week and Karen Hodella, 45, in October of 2002.

Whitis' body was found inside Gibson's New Albany home last week while Hodella's body washed up on the banks of the Ohio River a couple months after her family reported her missing in 2002.

Preliminary autopsy results for Kirk show she died from strangulation.

"The whole time we were working the case, we are hoping Stephanie comes home safely. This case is affecting people in New Albany and here locally also. We don't have these kind of cases. We work missing persons cases and it is a kid or an adult who just wants some time alone. We contact them and the adult tells us they just need time alone. We then contact the family and let them know they are alright. We just don't have cases like this," Bowyer concluded.

