

Search goes on despite heavy rains

By **LESLIE PALMA-SIMONCEK**
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Thirty volunteers braved lightning and heavy rains yesterday to continue the search for 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger, missing from her Westerleigh home since July 9.

Donna Cutugno, an organizer of the volunteer group called Friends of Jennifer, said the 30 searchers were divided into two groups yesterday afternoon. One group searched the length of Purdy Avenue in Meiers Corners while the other scoured Watchogue Road from Meiers Corners to Graniteville.

"We were hoping that we could

find some of Jennifer's clothing or anything that would help police," Mrs. Cutugno said. "We're looking for anything that could link Jennifer to anywhere on Staten Island."

Mrs. Cutugno said she maintains constant contact with detectives from the Staten Island Crimes Against Property Squad, who are handling the police investigation. "They give us a directive and tell us what areas we need to re-search."

Mrs. Cutugno urged people to stay off the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center, where Jennifer was last seen in the company of a homeless man believed to be living there. While

police have finished their search of the 28 buildings and more than 300 acres that make up the center, Lt. Louis Fiori said, "I don't know what further assistance anyone can be there."

Fiori said the police have completed the physical search and are now involved in "the investigative part of the job. We're still following up on leads, talking to people, sometimes talking to people a second time."

Asked about a transient man who was believed to have been seen with Jennifer, Fiori said, "we don't have any reason to speak to him further."

A small amount of a substance

found in a sink in an SIDC building more than a week ago, which police believed to be blood, is still being tested in a laboratory, Fiori said.

"They think it quite possibly is blood but they don't know what kind," he said. "They are going through an extensive series of tests and said it was going to take a little extra time."

Jennifer's mother, Karen Schweiger, said she was nervous yesterday. "It's the waiting" that's unnerving her, she said.

Fiori said: "I don't know where she is. If I could tell you that, I could sleep a little better at night."