

You can hear their hearts break

By MARY ENGELS and DAVID J. KRAJICEK

Daily News Staff Writers

Karen Schweiger sat at her kitchen table yesterday and stared through tear-swollen eyes at the screen door that her daughter, Jennifer, had walked out of four weeks ago.

"We feel in our hearts that Jennifer is alive. We still have hope," Schweiger said, her voice falling to a whisper. "Anything is possible."

In her first interview since the arrest of a suspect in the 12-year-old's disappearance, Schweiger clutched a handkerchief and talked quietly about her only daughter, a victim of Down's syndrome who disappeared on July 9.

"We just keep hoping and praying that Jennifer will come back to us," she said.

Accused in kidnaping

Schweiger and her husband, Kenneth, sat in court Wednesday clutching one another and crying as they watched Andre Rand, the man accused in the kidnaping and implicated in the disappearances of three other Staten Island girls.

"When he came into the courtroom, he looked scary to me," she said. "We have to trust the police in their judgment. Other than what we heard transpire in the courtroom, we don't know

anything about this man."

A visitor mentioned that Jennifer—always dressed up—was a favorite at the family's Catholic church.

"She's a real prissy missy," Schweiger said, smiling for a moment. "All of our energies are centered on Jennifer and her return. We continue to have hope, and what is there without faith and hope?"

She disappeared in 1981

On the other side of Staten Island, the father of Holly Ann Hughes, who disappeared in 1981 when she was 7, said he is "annoyed" that Rand walked free, even though he was the prime suspect in that case.

"I'm annoyed because this arrest is not proving anything . . . unless he makes a confession," said Peter Hughes, a construction worker who now lives in South Beach.

Hughes said he wants to know "one way or the other" what happened to his daughter. "Holly's disappearance will haunt me for the rest of my life," he said.

Tears & anger over two little girls lost



KEEPING HOPES ALIVE: Karen and Kenneth Schweiger at home with a picture of their missing daughter, Jennifer. "We feel in our hearts that Jennifer is alive," Mrs. Schweiger said.

JOHN PARSONS