

Searcher at SIDC hospitalized after an attack by bees

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A police officer digging through the wooded Staten Island Developmental Center grounds as part of a search for evidence and bodies was hospitalized after he was stung more than a dozen times by bees.

Officer Michael Hanson, a member of a Brooklyn Emergency Services Unit, suffered an allergic reaction to the bee stings and was rushed by his fellow officers to Staten Island Hospital, according to Sgt. Marie Zolfo of the 122nd Precinct. A nursing supervisor said Hanson was listed in good condition in the hospital this morning.

Hanson was in the woods behind Building 27 when he apparently disturbed a bee hive and was attacked by the buzzing swarm at 2 p.m.

The officer had been working as part of a specialized team searching for clues in the murder of 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger, whose body was found in a shallow grave in the woods behind Building 27 on Aug. 12. The grave was about 50 yards away from a campsite used by Andre Rand, the man charged with kidnapping the girl. Jennifer disappeared from the street near her Wardwell Avenue home in Westerleigh, and she was last seen walking with Rand on the SIDC grounds, police said.

Detectives are looking into pos-

sible links between Rand, a man with a history of crimes against children, and a number of other missing Staten Island children.

Since Jennifer's body was discovered, the special team of officers has been studying the territory near the grave and campsite for irregularities. Officers dig up the ground at spots that appear at all suspicious, police said.

Digging operations are still limited to hand shovels and careful study of the contours of the ground, authorities said.

The grave and campsite remained cordoned off yesterday. Two large special operations police trucks were still stationed at the mouth of the path leading to the gravesite last night.

Police hope to find Jennifer's clothing or other belongings. Investigators have not ruled out the possibility of finding other bodies buried there. But nothing discovered so far has been connected with the investigation.

Members of the Friends of Jennifer, the volunteer group that found Jennifer's body, meet each night at 7 at the Holy Family R.C. Church in Westerleigh to continue the search for clues and other bodies, according to Donna Cutugno, leader of the group. Teams of volunteer searchers have been focusing on cemeteries, wooded lots and shoreline areas on the North Shore.