

Man 'Praying in Tongues' Finds Missing Florida Girl

Normal

0

An autistic Florida girl who'd been the focus of a four-day search through alligator-infested woods was found alive Tuesday morning by a member of her Orlando-area church.

Eleven-year-old Nadia Bloom was discovered around 9 a.m. in a swampy area near Lake Jesup in the Orlando suburb of Winter Springs by James King, a member of Metro Church, where Nadia and her family worship. Nadia, who has an autism-related disorder called Asperger's syndrome, is in the hospital being treated for insect bites and dehydration.

"James said he was praying. He said he was praying in tongues, he was praying in [the Spirit], and he went right to her," Sandra Green, wife of Metro Church pastor Randy Green, told the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Officials said King was being questioned about what led him to Nadia. They said the girl was found in an area search teams had not cleared and that they had to use machetes to reach her in the thick brush.

"He's a hero to me right now," Winter Springs Police Chief Kevin Brunelle said of King. He said investigators had no reason to be suspicious of the rescue.

Nadia had been missing since Friday afternoon, when she parked her bicycle on the sidewalk and walked into a densely wooded swampland near the subdivision where she lives. Authorities believe she got lost while exploring in the woods. Before she disappeared, police said she read a book titled *Lanie*, about

an adventurous girl who camps in her back yard.

Officials think Nadia had been in a large conservation area around Lake Jesup, which is considered one of the most alligator-infested bodies of water in central Florida.

Brunelle said Nadia told rescuers two things: "I'm glad you guys found me" and "I can't believe you guys rescued me."

She said she never saw or talked to anyone after she entered the woods.

Nadia was fast approaching the 96-hour mark, when the odds of survival without food or water decrease. "We were getting close to that bewitching hour when I was going to have to make a decision, and I wasn't looking forward to that decision," Brunelle said.

Church members, friends and neighbors had been holding prayer vigils for the missing girl. After the rescue, a crowd gathered in Metro Church's parking lot began singing "Shout Hallelujah."

"I can't even describe it," Nadia's father, Jeff Bloom, said when asked how he felt about his daughter's rescue. "Let's give the glory to God."

A pediatric care expert at Florida Hospital said the biggest danger to Nadia's health would be the prolonged lack of drinking water.

"The key here really in her situation is dehydration," said Dr. Aaron Godshall, who is not treating Nadia. "The body can convert muscle protein and fat stores into energy. But fluid is another story. The heart must have a sufficient volume to be able to circulate the blood."

He said a child lost for days in the woods could also suffer from post-traumatic stress. But he said the fact that Nadia has Asperger's syndrome could have minimized that trauma.

“Who’s to say? Maybe she’s seeing this whole thing as an adventure,” he told the *Sentinel*. “She may see it in a different manner. Kids are extremely resilient. That’s not to say we don’t need to be vigilant about caring for this child. In so many ways, kids end up doing better than adults in the same kind of [circumstances].”