

Paula's Place honours slain elementary teacher

Community creates art room at school in memory of Paula Gallant

By Lindsay Jones - The Daily News

While it's been nearly a year since Paula Gallant was murdered, her spirit couldn't be more alive.

Family and dignitaries cut the ribbon on Paula's Place last night, a former industrial arts room turned into a sunny art haven, in memory of the beloved Grade 3 teacher.

"This art room is magnificent, and for an incredibly wonderful lady," said Gallant's sister, Lynn Gallant-Blackburn. "But it came as a result of a horrific and senseless murder. That's a bittersweet moment for me."

Gallant, 39, was found murdered in the trunk of her car in the school parking lot last Dec. 27.

Police haven't yet laid charges, although they have interviewed two persons of interest.

Gallant's husband, Jason MacRae, was questioned and released by police in early February.

Passion for art

Spending every spare moment working on the art room gave Gallant-Blackburn, and countless others, a way to immortalize Gallant's passion for art.

Gallant had formed an art club at the school. She had wanted to turn the empty space into an art room and was studying art at NSCAD University when her life was cut short.

Gallant's earthy and vibrant art lines the walls of the spacious room, along with sunflowers and daffodils. There's a painting of her baby, Anna, who was just six months old when she lost her mother.

A series of Grade 1 students' paintings pay tribute to Gallant's admiration of the work of French



'PAULA WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED': Lynn Gallant-Blackburn (centre-right), Paula Gallant's sister, hugs Richelle Williams during a tour of the new art room called Paula's Place at Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea School last night. In the foreground are Taylor Richter and Cole Matheson, former students of Gallant.

Impressionist Claude Monet.

Almost everything in the room was either made or donated by community members.

"It's energizing," said Gallant-Blackburn. "It gave me strength and it renewed my hope. I feel that if people can accomplish this, that tells me this investigation will be closed."

During a ceremony in the gymnasium, Gallant's sister, Lana Kenny, thanked the 150 in attendance.

"We are honoured that Paula will always be remembered in this way," said Kenny. "There are no words to ever thank you, but we will

always be forever grateful."

Gallant's former students, Grade 5 student Taylor Richter and Grade 6 student Cole Matheson, unveiled a painting of Gallant and her daughter Anna.

Matheson said his favourite teacher would cry if she could see the room. "It's amazing," he said. "Just what they did with it — everything, Paula's Corner. I just want to do a sketch of the corner with the computer and the benches."

Richelle Williams, Gallant's former colleague who now teaches at Springvale Elementary, said creat-

ing Paula's Place helped everyone focus on the positive.

"It's amazing what this whole community has learned from this human experience," said Williams.

She and Gallant were taking the same program at NSCAD.

Without her friend, Williams said she was at first reluctant to go back. She recently returned, only to realize attending art class was like Gallant peeking over her shoulder.

"She's too nosy not to," said Williams, laughing through tear soaked lashes.

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POLICE SEEK TIPS

Police want to talk to anyone who might have seen Paula Gallant's green 1997 Chevrolet Cavalier, licence number BMP 504, on Dec. 27, 2005.

Homicide investigators hope to track her movements before she was found dead in the trunk of the car in the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School parking lot.

Call the Halifax Regional Police and Halifax RCMP Integrated Major Crime Unit at 490-5333. Anonymous tips can be made to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

MINE DEMBECK

Four months after Paula Gallant's slaying, police and her family still struggle to solve the mystery



'I want people to remember her for the life that she had'

BY JANE ARMSTRONG, HALIFAX

Friends used to call the Gallant sisters "three peas in a pod," they were that close. When their parents died young, the sisters' bond grew tighter. Last Christmas, Lynn, Lana and Paula gathered their growing families to spend the holidays together.

On Dec. 26, Paula Gallant kissed her sisters goodbye and they never saw her again. The body of the 36-year-old schoolteacher was found two days later in the trunk of her car, parked at her school in a bedroom community west of Halifax. The vivacious mother of a baby girl had been slain.

Today, her sisters will mark four months since her disappearance. No charges have been laid in the high-profile case, and the family fears the police case is stalled and the public has moved on.

"It's still very surreal and very unimaginable," said Lynn Gallant-

Blackburn, Ms. Gallant's older sister. "A part of me has died forever."

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn, 43, said that she and her younger sisters always saw themselves as strong survivors. Now, they are just two Gallant sisters, and they are numb with grief. "I don't know what we are any more. I wake up every day with one purpose . . . to be Paula's voice and see this to the end.

"I want people to remember her for the life that she had — not for the fact that she was found in a trunk of a car, dead."

She also wants her sister's killer caught.

Police, for their part, are still trying to piece together the last hours of Ms. Gallant's life. And while they have issued public appeals for witnesses, they have been guarded about releasing information.

They have not said how Ms. Gallant was killed, which is typical when authorities don't want to tip off potential suspects. Police ar-

rested and questioned a man in January, but did not lay charges.

Police say Ms. Gallant was last seen alive on Dec. 27. She telephoned her sister Lana at 1:30 p.m. and told her she was going shopping. She did not return home. Police said a family member reported her missing at 10:14 p.m. Shortly after midnight, Ms. Gallant's 1997 green Chevrolet Cavalier was found in the parking lot at the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea School.

Witnesses have told police they saw the car parked there at 5 p.m. But there has been no recent information, RCMP Sergeant Frank Skidmore said.

"There has been a lot about the investigation that we have not divulged; nor will we, until such time that it's solved," Sgt. Skidmore said. Even though police have not laid charges, the officer said the public's safety is not jeopardized.

"Of course, no one would want to solve it any more than we would."

Sgt. Skidmore said "Hopefully, we'll get a break on it. . . . We'll never give up, but it that way."

Ms. Gallant's death has left a gaping hole not just in her family, but among her wide circle of friends and colleagues in Halifax and her Cape Breton hometown of Glace Bay. Her friends say Ms. Gallant was a talented teacher, artist and devoted mother. She was a natural ham, who liked to belt out songs at parties or dress up in costume. She'd do anything for a laugh, said her friend Andre MacLean.

"If you were at a party, there could be six conversations going on and I guarantee you everyone would gravitate to her," Ms. MacLean said.

"She was always the centre of attention and she loved it. She had a very dry wit and her timing was perfect."

Yet her friend was also wise beyond her years and worked hard to lead a balanced life. Her daugh-



Paula Gallant's friends and family remember the 36-year-old as a talented teacher, artist and devoted mother. Her body was found last December in the trunk of her car, parked at the Nova Scotia school where she taught. The family fears the case is stalled and the public has moved on.

'It's still very surreal and very unimaginable. A part of me has died forever.'

Lynn Gallant-Blackburn,
Ms. Gallant's older sister

ter, Anna, was the light of her life, Ms. MacLean said.

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said she and her sisters struggled when their parents died in their 40s. Both died of aneurysms within four years of one another. Paula was still in her teens. Ms. Gallant-Blackburn became a surrogate mother to Paula.

"We had one of two paths to choose as young women and we chose to stay together and live a good life, work hard and try to bring laughter to people's souls," Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said.

The three sisters and their families lived within 15 minutes of one

another outside Halifax and spent holidays and summer vacations together. Their young children played together.

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said she admired her little sister.

"I said since the day she died, 'If I could be blessed to have 10 per cent of what she had, it would be an amazing life. She was filled with wisdom, but she was also filled with humour. I would be hard-pressed to find an enemy."

The surviving Gallant sisters have scheduled visits with Anna and Ms. Gallant-Blackburn takes her to church.

This month, friends and family held a vigil for Ms. Gallant at her gravesite. They also initiated a letter-writing campaign to local newspapers, hoping to prod people's memory.

"There will be an ending to this story," Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said. "I'm absolutely confident of that. I have to believe that."

Family has warning for Gallant's killer

CRIME

By Richard Dooley - The Daily News

Six months after Paula Ann Gallant's body was found in the trunk of her car beside the Timberlea school where she taught art, her family has a simple message for her killer:

"You are going to get caught," said Lynn Gallant-Blackburn, Paula's older sister. "You will go to jail for her murder."

Paula Gallant, a Grade 3 art teacher at Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School, was found early in the morning of Dec. 28, 2005.

She'd been murdered and her body left in the trunk of her green Chevrolet Cavalier.

The car was found by a family member beside the elementary school, located just a few minutes' walk from her Silver Maple Drive home that she shared with her husband, Jason MacRae, and her one-year-old daughter Anna.

Gallant planned a Boxing Day shopping trip and may have left her house early that afternoon, possibly headed to the Bayers Lake Business Park. She



PAULA GALLANT

talked to her sister on the phone around 1:30 p.m. When she didn't return home that night, she was reported missing to police around 10:14 p.m. The car was found just before midnight.

Police opened the trunk of the car just after midnight, but investigators believe Gallant had died several hours earlier. The cause of death has never been revealed, but police confirmed early in the investigation that Gallant's car was not left running and she didn't die of asphyxiation as a result of being locked in the trunk.

Gallant-Blackburn said her sister was a kind-hearted person with a passion for helping children. She is mystified by how her kid sister became the victim of murder. She describes her as an honest, hard-working person with a passion for helping children. Gallant-Blackburn said what happened to her sister could happen to any woman.

"Paula was your next-door neighbour; she was your children's aunt; she was your sister; she was your friend," she said.

Police have not laid any charges in the case, but Gallant's husband was questioned and released by police in early February.

Police confirmed that investigators have also been asking questions at the school and at Nova Scotia Power, where MacRae works.

A critical part of the investigation is filling in the lengthy gap between the time Gallant left home and when her car was found.

"The point we are hammering home is for anyone who saw Paula Gallant's vehicle on the busiest shopping day of the year to come forward," said Halifax RCMP Const. Joe Taplin.

Filling in the gaps in the timeline would put investigators a significant step closer to catching Gallant's killer, he said.

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HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CAR?: Paula Gallant's body was found in the trunk of her green 1997 Chevrolet Cavalier.

TIMELINE

DEC. 27

- **Between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.** - Paula Ann Gallant tells her sister she is going shopping.
- **10:14 p.m.** - Family members report Gallant missing.
- **Just before midnight** - Gallant's car is found in the parking lot of the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School.

DEC. 28

- **12:30 a.m.** - Police find Gallant's body in the trunk of her car.

FEB. 8

- Gallant's husband, Jason MacRae is questioned by police and released. No charges are laid.

No clue too small to help solve teacher's murder

Even the smallest bit of information could help catch Paula Ann Gallant's killer.

That's why police want the public's help in reconstructing Gallant's movements the day she died.

Police want anyone who may have seen Gallant or her green, two-door 1997 Chevrolet Cavalier, licence number BMP 504 after 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 27 to contact them.

The car may have had a pink ribbon tied to the radio antenna.

"The smallest bit of information, no matter how insignificant it might seem, could break the case open," said Halifax RCMP Const. Joe Taplin.

Police want to talk to anyone who saw her car in metro shopping areas, near the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School or at her home at 41 Silver Maple Dr. during the day. Investi-

gators say the car arrived at the school between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. They are also trying to determine the location of the car between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Anyone with information is asked to contact police at 490-5016 or Major Crime Unit investigators at 490-5333. Anonymous tips can be made to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477. Secure web tips can be made at www.crimestoppers.ns.ca.

Local NEWS

GOT A TIP? CALL 421-5810

City Editor: Dan Harrison
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UNSOLVED MURDER



SEEKING JUSTICE: Sisters Lana Kenny (left) and Lynn Gallant-Blackburn will be canvassing the neighbourhood today where their sister, Paula, was murdered.

Police believe someone saw Gallant's car go to school

By Richard Dooley - The Daily News

Homicide investigators believe two key things about the murder of Paula Anne Gallant: Her car was driven to Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School and someone saw it.

Gallant, 36, taught Grade 3 at the school and lived about a kilometre away by road, a shorter distance if you take one of the paths through the school yard. Her body was found just after midnight a year ago today in the trunk of her green Chevrolet Cavalier.

"There are two possible scenarios there," said RCMP Cpl. Joe Taplin.

Investigators think someone either drove the car to the school parking lot and walked away, or took another vehicle to the lot. Then they returned with Gallant's car, left it, and drove off in the first vehicle.

Someone was at the school up until 4 p.m. That person has spoken to police, enabling investigators to figure out a rough timeline of the movements of Gallant's car, placing it in the lot between 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

"What we're trying to get people to think is where they were that day a year ago," said Taplin. "Especially if they were in or around the school parking lot."

Taplin said that information is critical to making an arrest in the year-old murder investigation.

"If someone saw the vehicle being driven there, or a second vehicle, they might have seen the driver and we could get a description," said Taplin. "That's why we keep putting the green Cavalier out there. It is so key to the investigation."

The car is a green 1997 Chevrolet Cavalier, plate number BMP 504.

The murder case is one of five cases subject to a \$50,000 reward leading to an arrest and conviction. Information about the reward program can be obtained by calling 1-888-710-9090 or at the website www.gov.ns.ca/just/divisions/polys/rewards/CurrentUnsolvedCases.asp.

Anyone with information is asked to contact police at 490-5016. Anonymous tips can be made to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477. Secure web tips can be made at www.crimestoppers.ns.ca.
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PAULA GALLANT

A puzzle with a missing piece

Investigation focuses on finding someone who might have seen Gallant's car near school

By Richard Dooley - The Daily News

Paula Anne Gallant is never far from the minds of her sisters.

A year ago today, the Timberlea schoolteacher was found murdered in the trunk of her car, parked outside the elementary school where she taught Grade 3.

The cause of death has never been made public — police say that's part of the investigation — and investigators are still trying to piece together how Gallant's car got to the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School that day unnoticed.

The murder remains unsolved but never far from the minds of Gallant's older sisters Lana Kenny and Lynn Gallant-Blackburn.

Inside Kenny's tidy Hammonds Plains home, pictures of Paula are on the wall. A photo album is never far away and memories fill the hallways.

"This is the last place we were together," said Gallant-Blackburn, glancing around her sister's living room.

Last Christmas, as at every Christmas since Paula was born, the three sisters managed to spend the day together.

As they each married and had children, the families grew closer, celebrating milestones together and being a part of each other's daily lives.

Until a year ago today. "I'm stuck on the 27th of December," said Gallant-Blackburn. "That pain is raw."

To understand the pain, you have to understand the Gallant sisters.

Eight years separate Paula from Lynn, with Lana the quieter middle sister. When Paula and Lana were still in their teens, both parents died and the sisters were left to rely on each other.

Lynn went from being older sister to de facto mother, confidante and best friend.

Drawing closer

The three sisters took comfort from each other by drawing closer.

"It was like the three of us became one at a very early age," said Gallant-Blackburn.

The three became so close they could finish each other's sentences in mid-thought.

"It really was something to see the three of them talking," said Andre MacLean, a longtime family friend.

MacLean can see the void Paula's murderer has created in the lives of the sisters and their families. She was with Lynn and Lana the day police found Paula's body.

She, perhaps more than anyone in the lives of the three sisters, can sense the loss they feel.

"You couldn't have a conversation with just one of them," she says. "They all got involved."

Lynn and Lana are still involved. That may be why you'll see one or the other in Paula's old neighbourhood talking to people today or tomorrow, trying to shake some memories loose from a year ago.

Both hold the deep conviction that someone may have seen something so ordinary, so normal, on that first shopping day after Christmas last year that it didn't register.

But that lost memory may hold the key to bringing Paula's killer to justice.

The police investigation has concentrated on the movement of Paula's green Chevrolet Cavalier during the day. It's believed she planned to go Boxing Day shopping, but there is no solid evidence to suggest she was ever in a store that day.

Lana wants people to open their minds and think a little differently about her sister's movements on the day she disappeared.

"Let's pretend she never went shopping, that she had no intention of shopping," she says. "That vehicle was driven from her house to the school."

Her point is a good one: Someone had to have seen Paula's car some time during the day but it was such a nor-

mal sight, it could easily be forgotten.

For the police, getting Paula from 41 Silver Maple Dr. to the school a kilometre away is crucial to solving the murder.

"We have to put Paula somewhere after she left her home," said RCMP Cpl. Joe Taplin.

Her husband, Jason MacRae, was questioned by police and released. Attempts to contact him were unsuccessful.

Focal point

The school is a focal point for that neighbourhood. Paths cross the school property connecting two large subdivisions and hundreds of people drive past the entrance of the school every day.

The police believe Paula's car showed up in the parking lot sometime after 4 p.m., most likely between 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Lana believes someone must have seen something in that time frame that could help police solve the murder. But getting that person to come forward with information is key to solving the crime.

"What people have to understand," said Lana, setting down her teacup next to Paula's photo album. "We are normal, everyday people. This could happen to anybody's sister, friend, mother or daughter."

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'She saw beauty in everything'

Art room dedicated to the memory of murdered teacher

By KRISTEN LIPSCOMBE
Staff Reporter

A grinning brown-haired woman wraps her arms protectively around a sleeping baby. Mother and daughter together cast a shadow behind them, on a wall of beautiful blue and yellow brush strokes.

This telling painting, which depicts 36-year-old murder victim Paula Anne Gallant and baby Anna, now hangs in a special room at Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea School.

Ms. Gallant's body was discovered in the trunk of her car outside the elementary school last Dec. 28. Tuesday would have been the Timberlea woman's 37th birthday.

The portrait, by local artist Ineke Graham, was unveiled Wednesday evening at the grand opening of Paula's Place, a new art room dedicated to the memory of the popular teacher.

"She was really nice and she wanted everybody to work hard and do really good and try their best," Cole Matheson, 11, said of the teacher who encouraged his passion for drawing cartoons.

"And she was always really fun and everybody loved her."

Cole said Ms. Gallant, who taught him in both Primary and Grade 3, would be amazed with the renovated room and the many resources within its walls.

"She'd love it," he said of the bright and welcoming creative space, already filled with children's art, including depictions of Claude Monet's sunflowers — Ms. Gallant's favourite flower — and some of the teacher's own artwork.

Lynn Gallant-Blackburn, one of Ms. Gallant's two older sisters, said Paula's Place is a true reflection of the woman it honours.

"This room is what Paula tried to inspire in her kids," she said as friends, family members, teachers and stu-



Cole Matheson and Taylor Richter unveil a painting of their former teacher, Paula Gallant, during a dedication ceremony at Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea School on Wednesday. Helping with the dedication is one of Paula Gallant's sisters, Lana Kenny. (ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

dents chatted around her.

"She saw the beauty in everything."

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn and her sister, Lana Kenny, each wore a necklace adorned with a small silver "P" charm to commemorate their sibling.

"As tired and uninspired as the room was prior to her death, she would continue to allow the children to come here and be inspired," Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said.

Indeed, it was Ms. Gallant herself who, six years ago, saw the potential for changing the old industrial arts room into a special place for creating.

"Paula had all kinds of ideas and enthusiasm about it," Richard Mueller, an associate professor at NSCAD University in Halifax, said during the formal ceremony.

Ms. Gallant was taking visual arts courses at NSCAD at the time of her death and university officials presented a certificate of accomplishment to her sisters on Wednesday night.

A couple of hundred community members attended the official opening of Paula's Place, which took place on the National Day of Remembrance and Action for Violence Against Women

and the anniversary of the 1989 murders of 14 young women in Montreal.

Bill Estabrooks, the NDP MLA for Timberlea-Prospect, said he recently proposed a resolution in the legislature officially congratulating and thanking the friends and family of Paula Gallant.

Her loved ones have worked "tirelessly to make Paula's Place an important part in this school," he said.

Parent Todd Leader was the evening's host.

"This night, despite the tears, is a celebration," he said. "Let's celebrate."

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Goodbye too soon

Community buries popular teacher found dead

LAKESIDE

By Rachel Boomer - The Daily News

They gathered yesterday for a funeral that shouldn't have happened, for a young mother who was full of life.

And although friends and family still have no answers about why Paula Anne Gallant died at just 36 years old, they packed into a Lakeside church by the hundreds to say goodbye.

"You will always have Paula's gentle hand on your shoulder, guiding you as Anna grows," family friend Andre MacLean told the gathering, speaking specifically to Gallant's husband, Jason MacRae.

"The best of both of you is in Anna."

Gallant was a Grade 3 teacher at Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary; an artist studying at NSCAD University, and a new mom whose daughter, Anna, was almost a year old.

Her body was found Dec. 28 in the trunk of her car, parked in her school's parking lot. RCMP investigators say there were no signs of a struggle or the use of a weapon, but they still don't know how she died. They're awaiting the results of a battery of tests that may answer the question of what happened to the popular teacher.

"May all of us leave those questions aside," Father James Richards told the 300-plus crowd of mourners, some of whom listened to the funeral from the church steps because there wasn't enough room inside.

"It is quite enough for us now to be together in grief. It won't solve anything, but right now, it's all that we have."

Richards told friends and family that when someone like Gallant dies young, it's possible that "in their short life, that person has fulfilled God's plan in ways we cannot see."

MacLean described her yesterday as a "beautiful, caring" person, a "diamond" who extended light to all who knew her.

"Everyone gravitated toward her, because she truly was the life of the party," MacLean said, remembering Gallant singing, dancing and dressing up as Superman at an annual gathering of 12 friends last October.

"Paula loved the limelight. You could always count on Paula to be the entertainment, and her friends truly appreciated it."

The church bulletin featured a picture of Gallant's painting, *The Four Elements*, and a quote from her for its introduction: "Who or what we've become relates back to the people who brought us into this world."

After the funeral, hundreds of sombre friends and supporters paused to watch as a teary-eyed MacRae hugged family members.

Well-wishers can donate to a trust fund for the couple's daughter, Anna Paul MacRae, at any Scotiabank branch.

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PAULA GALLANT



OUT IN FORCE: Mourners line up outside the Sacred Heart Church in Lakeside yesterday for the funeral of Paula Gallant.

Tipsters can soon collect big bucks

Program to give \$50,000 for tips on murders, missing persons

By **DAVID JACKSON**
Provincial Reporter

People with information about unsolved murders and missing persons may soon be able to collect \$50,000 from the province.

The Tories promised a new reward program in their election platform, and Justice Minister Murray Scott said he's looking to have a program in place within months.

Mr. Scott, who was a police officer for 20 years, said there are cases when police know people have information but don't share it.

"For varied reasons, people refuse to come forward, or maybe feel they're unable to," Mr. Scott said Tuesday. "I think in

this particular case, and we're talking about serious crimes here, I'm hoping that it will be enough to entice people to come forward."

Mr. Scott said the program would focus on two types of cases: unsolved murders and missing persons.

"I think as a province and the Department of Justice, we should do all we can, for example, to help families in those very, very stressful situations."

Mr. Scott said an example of an unsolved murder case is that of Jason MacCullough, who was found murdered in a Dartmouth park seven years ago. Halifax Regional Municipality offered a \$25,000 reward in 2001 for infor-

mation leading to an arrest, but it didn't help police.

The minister said the program would be much different from Crime Stoppers, which takes anonymous tips on many types of crimes and offers cash awards of up to \$2,000 when police lay charges.

Mr. Scott said tipsters to the provincial program would have to give their names and possibly even have to testify. He said to get the cash, the information "would have to lead to a successful conclusion of the case."

Ontario has a similar reward program.

RCMP Sgt. Wayne Noonan, Crime Stoppers' provincial police co-ordinator, said a reward program is a good idea.

"Anything that would be an incentive to get people to come forward, obviously, is a positive thing," he said.

Sgt. Noonan said he doesn't



Crime tipsters to a new provincial program would have to give their names and possibly even have to testify in court to earn their reward money. (File)

think the provincial program would lead to people withholding information until a reward is offered.

Halifax Regional Police spokesman Const. Jeff Carr said it wouldn't be appropriate for him to comment on the reward program since it's still in the planning stages.

NDP justice critic Kevin Deveau said anything that can help solve cold cases is a good

idea, but he'd want to be sure there are safeguards around cash for testimony, and ensure cases are still thoroughly investigated.

"You open up, obviously, the floodgates, potentially, for people whose testimony could incriminate someone and it's based on the pecuniary interest, not based on the memory."

Liberal justice critic Michel Samson said \$50,000 seems like

a reasonable amount to start, adding that the province should be willing to review the amount after a year or two.

"If a financial incentive is going to help put some closure to a number of cases, especially some murder cases where families are still suffering because of lack of information, if this is going to help, I think it's a positive move," Mr. Samson said.

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Lives, interrupted



Top row: Kimberly McAndrew has been missing since 1989. Jonathan Reader was found dead in August 2005. Tyrone Oliver was shot to death in July 2000. Second row: Jason MacCullough was found shot to death in August 1999. Paula Gallant was discovered dead in the trunk of her car last December. These are the first five major crime cases the province's Justice Department hopes to solve with a new \$50,000 reward program. (File)

Five young Nova Scotians, five families left to mourn: The province is offering rewards up to \$50,000 if you have information that can solve these crimes

By **KRISTEN LIPSCOMBE**
Staff Reporter

Almost a year after her sister's murder, Lynn Gallant-Blackburn is still waiting to mourn.

"I'm stuck on Dec. 27, and I won't be able to move forward until somebody's held accountable," she said of that fateful day in 2005 — the last day her family spoke to

36-year-old wife, mother and teacher Paula Anne Gallant.

"Every living breath I take is to achieve that end," she said over the phone Tuesday from Boutiliers Point.

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said she hopes a new program offering up to \$50,000 for information leading to convictions in major crimes will help her do just that.

On Tuesday, the Justice Department announced the first five cases it hopes to conclude through the initiative.

The murder of Ms. Gallant is one of them.

The Timberlea woman was discovered dead in the trunk of her car in the early-morning hours of Dec. 28 outside Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Elementary School.

The Grade 3 teacher was getting ready to return to work in the new year after having her first child, Anna.

"We're entering the 12th month of Paula's murder," said Ms. Gallant-Blackburn, her calm voice not quite masking the sadness just below the surface. "It's been 336 days (Tuesday) that somebody ripped my sister from my life."

Ms. Gallant-Blackburn said she thinks there is a witness out there who can provide the missing piece to the puzzle and feels the program could provide the extra push that