

Unexplained death of Bx. girl probed

THE DEATH of a 3-year-old Bronx girl was still under investigation Saturday after autopsy results were inconclusive, officials said.

Cristal Sanchez was found unconscious in her family's Longfellow Ave. home in Tremont about 1:15 p.m. Friday.

The child, who was in the care of her mother's 32-year-old boyfriend when she stopped breathing, died a short time later at Bronx Lebanon Hospital, sources said.

Doctors found bruising on the little girl's waist, a police source said.

A spokeswoman for the city's medical examiner said determining the child's cause of death will require further study.

"All I know is that she was sick," a relative at the apartment said Friday. "She was throwing up two days ago."

No arrests were made.

Shayna Jacobs and Joe Kemp

Miracle cure's sainthood seal

JAKE FINKBONNER was so close to death after flesh-eating bacteria infected him through a cut on his lip that his parents had last rites performed and were discussing donating the 5-year-old's organs.

Jake's 2006 cure from the infection — after a relic of 17th century Native American Kateri Tekakwitha was placed on his leg — was deemed medically inexplicable by the Vatican, the "miracle" needed to propel her on to sainthood.

Kateri will be canonized Sunday along with six other people, the first Native American from what is now the U.S. to receive the honor. Besides Kateri, Pope Benedict will declare another American a saint Sunday — Mother Marianne Cope, a 19th century Franciscan nun from Utica, N.Y.

The Associated Press



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Sweet indeed. Bettina May, a Burlesque performer, shows off style that got her "genius" entry pass to America. Photo by Jeff Bachner

BY ERICA PEARSON
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

SHE SHIMMIED her way to a green card.

Burlesque star Bettina May, who is from Canada but lives in Brooklyn, just earned coveted "genius" status from the feds — allowing her to keep twirling her tassels in the U.S.

The "extraordinary ability" green cards are given out sparingly to immigrants who can prove they're truly unique, and May had to jump through hoops to get one.

"I had to prove that there was no one like me in the world," the 33-year-old Williamsburg entertainer said.

"My mom always said that. But my mom can't write a letter to U.S. immigration saying, 'She's the spiciest girl in the world!'"

May collected letters of recommendation from big names in burlesque and had to convince U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services that her line of work is an art form.

"What is art?" said her lawyer, Jan Brown. "Something that communicates to people visually and socially."

Brown, who put together a 6-inch-thick application for May, believes she's the first burlesque star to qualify for a benefit that often goes to famous artists, top athletes and Nobel Prize winners.

"We certainly had to go the distance to convince USCIS that she qualified under their criteria," he said. "The bottom line is she really is one of the best pin-up models and burlesque artists."

USCIS rules say E11 and E16 extraordinary ability green cards only go to "the best of the best in their field." They gave out 2,524 last year.

In the past, they've been awarded to a master storyteller from Gambia and a golfer from Zimbabwe. John Lennon and Yoko Ono got them. New York lawyer Michael Wildes applies for the Miss Universe winners each year.

"You have to really show that you're the proud and the few out of the many that are out there," Wildes said. "We've gotten letters from Bill Cosby for comedians, letters from Billy Joel for singers and pianists."

Similar temporary O-1 visas — the O is for "outstanding" — have gone to Canadian-born Playboy Playmate Shera Bechar and Brazilian soccer god Pele, letting them work in the U.S. for up to three years.

But scoring one of the green cards — which provide a path to U.S. citizenship — is a bigger coup. Brown has secured them for a body piercer and a makeup artist. Each time, he has to give the bureaucrats a crash course in the applicant's often unconventional field.

"My attitude is that in every field, somebody has to be the best... My job is to ferret out the evidence," he said.

In May's case, that meant listing awards like her Golden Pasties from the New York Burlesque Festival, press clippings and TV appearances — including an in-the-