

# GALINDO: Defendant's parents don't want killing to define daughter's life

Sonia twice tried to kill herself with pills, Debbie Galindo said. One attempt came after a boyfriend broke off a relationship. The second time, she consumed 50 aspirins and spent four days in intensive care.

Her parents took her to a Kansas City psychiatric hospital. She ran. Once, when Herb Galindo fetched her off a dark street, she begged him not to return her. He did anyway. After another escape, Herb Galindo didn't bother.

"They obviously couldn't keep her there," he said.

Debbie Galindo then researched other options, using knowledge from her undergraduate degree in psychology, and selected a hospital in Windsor, Mo. Sonia stayed there four weeks.

Though she did not finish high school, Sonia earned an equivalency diploma. At 18, she got two jobs and moved to an apartment. She took in injured animals.

She eventually earned a two-year degree. She also completed firefighter training and volunteered. Shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks, Sonia and three other firefighters went to New York.

She stayed one week, helping however she could, including "putting people in body bags," her father said.

Later, she became an emergency medical technician in Sedalia, Mo.

In 2003, Sonia's then-boyfriend suffered an aneurysm. She nursed him and taught him to speak again, do math and recognize colors. The experience sparked an interest in nursing, her parents said. She entered CMSU's nursing program.

She took notes and created study guides for blind and disabled students. Her empathy prompted one professor to write in a recommendation letter:

*"Ms. Galindo represents one of the most committed students I have met in my 30 years' association with Central. ... The way she cares about students with special needs touched me deeply."*

Her parents moved to Texas after Herb Galindo accepted an engineering job. They helped Sonia buy a house and supported her so she



Alex

could focus on school full time.

Sonia mowed one disabled man's lawn and nursed another neighbor's terminally ill mother-in-law.

"She has a heart of gold," said former neighbor Wendy Anderson.

At the funeral of Anderson's mother-in-law, Sonia delivered an impromptu, heartfelt eulogy after the pastor struggled in his sermon.

"She was amazing," Anderson said.

Even an ex-boyfriend, who said his relationship with Sonia ended badly a few years ago, admits she cared deeply for others.

Yet the man said that their breakup was so troubled, he and his new girlfriend changed their phone numbers and he quit his job.

## Sonia and Alex

Introduced by mutual friends, Sonia and Alex began dating earlier this year. In July, Sonia took Alex to Texas to meet her parents.

Anderson described the couple's relationship as fiery. They always seemed broken up or on the verge of it. But Alex always came back, she said.

"She said he made her feel like no one else had ever made her feel," Anderson recalled.

Sonia told friends she was pregnant, news that displeased Alex, Anderson said. "He said he had scrubbed toilets for years to get where he was and she was going to ruin everything."

Sonia said she suffered a miscarriage Oct. 21, a week before the shooting. After the miscarriage, Alex ignored Sonia, Anderson said.

About that time, Sonia began a journal after a nursing professor recommended it for therapeutic reasons. In her first entry, she wrote:

*"Alex, God I miss him. I don't understand how he could be this way towards me. ... He told me he wants to work things out ... a couple hours later, he says he can't talk to me. ... This isn't him. No one believes me, but this isn't him."*

Sonia's despair grew in her second entry.

*"The fact is, I want to die. I'm ready to die. ... I thought about overdosing on pills, but too many things can go wrong. It might not work. I thought about crashing my car, but I might accidentally hurt someone else, or not quite do the job for myself."*

Alex then refused to return Sonia's calls, according to her journal.

*"He's never not answered like this before. I bought the gun right afterwards. Well, it took a few hours actually. I took it out to shoot. Good thing I did. It messes up. It won't shoot every bullet. I could just see it. I try to shoot myself, the bullet doesn't go off, someone takes the gun away and I go to the nut house again. It's almost impossible to kill yourself in a nut house. So now I have another gun. (A) bigger gun. ... I have to make sure I don't mess up. I got one chance at this, because I'm going to do it in front of Alex."*

Sonia's parents had noticed changes in their daughter, which they said became more profound the week before the killing. She called at all hours and used profanities.

"She was shouting and yelling and then an hour later, she'd call and say, 'Please help me. Something's wrong with me,'" Debbie Galindo said.

The Galindos rushed to Kansas City the day their daughter said she miscarried. When they left two days later, Debbie Galindo said, her daughter appeared to be doing better.

She asked, "Do you have to leave?"

"She had never said that before," Debbie Galindo said.

Sonia mentioned her former boyfriend, the one who had the aneurysm, was coming from New York to help care for her dogs. As they drove home, Debbie Galindo wondered why her daughter needed help with her dogs.

Today, the Galindos kick themselves for missing the "red flags." They said they think their daughter sought out her former boyfriend as part of her suicide plot. She bought him groceries, wrote detailed notes on the dogs' care and left him \$800, plus debit cards to access about \$3,000 in credit-card advances.

"In hindsight, I wish we would have stayed," Debbie Galindo said. "We never thought she would harm Alex or herself."

The Star's John Shultz contributed to this report.

To reach Christine Vendel, police reporter, call (816) 234-4438 or send e-mail to [cvendel@kcstar.com](mailto:cvendel@kcstar.com).