

FCSO's search for three continues

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After making an over 200-mile one-way trip to Louisiana Thursday, Fannin County law enforcement officials did not find the bodies of three Leonard residents who are missing - but, they did not come up empty handed. The latest press release from Fannin County Sheriff Donnie Foster states that additional evidence was located inside the vehicle and utility trailer of 52-year-old Thomas Taunton, who is suspected of murdering his mother, 79-year-old Sue Harpst, his step-father, 73-year-old Harold Harpst; and his sister, 48-year-old Regina Taunton.

The case ended up in Stonewall, La., after officials named Taunton as a person of interest, and tracked him there. They took him into custody at an auto repair shop after his truck broke down. The press release states that Taunton was arrested on a Fannin County warrant for capital murder at approximately 3 p.m. Thursday.

The case began Wednesday after police received information regarding three persons possibly missing from the county. Officers went to the location on State Highway 78 north of Leonard, but were unable to make contact with anybody at the residence. After gaining entrance and searching the property, they still were unable to locate anybody at the home, but did see several suspicious things that led them to believe foul play was involved. Due to the fact that no bodies have been found, police have deemed the investigation a missing persons case.

Harold Harpst is a double leg amputee and suffers from diabetes. He works from home and when he does leave home, he usually informs his neighbors so they can watch over his property. Sue Harpst was a seamstress who did alterations. Thomas Taunton is Sue Harpst's son.

Officials are still looking for the vehicle belonging to the Harpst family. It is a silver 2007 Dodge Caravan with Texas handicap license plate 8CPYH. The van is equipped with a wheelchair lift on the driver's side and a rack for carrying a wheelchair is on the rear of the van. Anyone believing they may have seen the van should contact Fannin County Sheriff's Office at 903-587-2134, or contact their local law enforcement agency.