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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Update to Lake Park Death Investigation

On Thursday, April 24th, Sheriff Eddie Cathey updated the Mayor of Lake Park on the investigation into the death of Mr. James Martin (Mark) Hudspeth. The content of that update is being released publicly by the Sheriff as an investigative update as well:

On Monday, April 21st, my officers responded to the Village of Lake Park to investigate the disappearance of Mr. James Martin Hudspeth, who is also known as Mark. That evening, a deputy who was searching an area behind Faith United Methodist Church located Mr. Hudspeth behind a storage shed, deceased. Our investigators remained on the scene until the early morning hours of Tuesday, April 22nd taking photographs, collecting evidence and talking to potential witnesses. Since that time, investigators have been back to the scene, examining the evidence and have kept in close contact with the medical examiner. At this time Mr. Hudspeth's death continues to be treated as a non-accidental death. I want to ensure the family and community that the Union County Sheriff's Office will continue to thoroughly investigate Mr. Hudspeth's death until the cause of his death has been determined.

This means that we have ruled out any causes that would have accidentally inflicted the type of injuries suffered by Mr. Hudspeth. After consultation with the Medical Examiner's Office, investigators remain unable to determine whether Mr. Hudspeth's injuries were self-inflicted or were inflicted by someone else. Therefore, at this point, the case is being investigated with no possibility being discounted.

Additional forensic evidence is being evaluated with assistance of the SBI, and investigators continue to work diligently toward a resolution in this case. It is important that concerned citizens not read into facts and circumstances already known about this incident. For example, current rumors are circulating that this was a gang-related homicide. Such rumors are completely baseless and groundless. In cases such as this, investigators work where the evidence takes them, without preconceived justifications or explanations. That is what we have done up to this point and what we will do up until the resolution of this case. Sometimes these cases take time, and can't be completed within the timeframe of a made-for-TV movie.

It is fair to say, however, that a formal suspect in this incident has not been identified. Additionally, we will not speculate as to why Mr. Hudspeth was found deceased and in the location he was. We will, however, continue to actively work this investigation to bring closure to Mr. Hudspeth's family and friends, and if his death was caused at the hand of another, bring that individual to justice.

We will continue to provide enhanced patrol presence in your Village, in an attempt to help citizens feel more secure in their homes and in the common areas. It is important to emphasize that we feel that there is no ongoing threat to your citizens as a result of this incident. Crime, by its nature does not limit itself to jurisdictional lines and limits, meaning that an incident of this nature is a concern to all county residents, not just your citizens. While you have had several high profile incidents occur in the Village, there is absolutely no evidence or criminal intelligence that the Village of Lake Park is being singled out for criminal activity in any way, shape or form. We always encourage citizens to be cognizant of their surroundings, report suspicious activity to 911, and take steps to maintain security of their homes and property. That is no different in this case.

We will endeavor to keep the public informed as much as we can about any progress in the investigation. However, I think you can understand that we would also not prematurely release details surrounding the case that would inhibit our ability to bring any suspect who may be identified to justice. Thank you for the opportunity to communicate to you and your citizens regarding this important matter.

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For additional information please contact Capt. Ronnie Whitaker, 704-283-3887