

All leads taken

By *KELSIE HAHN Daily Light intern*

The search for 81-year-old Doris Phillips in the area around her home was called off Friday, but the investigation continues full force for the woman reported missing early Wednesday morning, Ellis County Sheriff's Office officials said.

In an interview late Friday afternoon, sheriff's Lt. Clint Tims said investigators do not believe Phillips is still in the area surrounding her home.

"This morning, it was a real extensive search on foot," he said. "I think all of that has been exhausted."

Now, the sheriff's office, assisted by the Texas Rangers, is working to track down the many leads investigators have received during the past five days.

"We're following up on every lead that we've got," said Tims, adding that the disappearance is still being investigated as foul play.

Ten local agencies and more than 100 volunteers combed the area surrounding Phillips' home on Old Church Road near the Texas Motorplex early Friday morning.

Searchers walked the area in gridline patterns looking for any sign of Phillips, but as the hottest hours of the day approached, sheriff's Capt. Danny Williams said the searchers planned to break for the afternoon due to the high temperatures.

"We've already had several people who've had heat exhaustion," Williams said late Friday morning, adding that searchers were asked to check in and out as well as travel in groups for their safety.

Tims said the sheriff's office does not need any volunteers at this time, but asks anyone with information to call.

Concern for Phillips has grown among her friends and family as the investigation continues on.

Eric Feinman, administrator at Pleasant Manor Health and Rehabilitation Center, met Phillips when her late husband, RC Phillips, resided at the facility.

"She pretty much befriended everyone in the house. That's why we're so anxious now," he said, adding that many individuals have called asking for details and ways to help.

"She just made that big of an impression," Feinman said. "She didn't meet a stranger — she made friends of everyone who had briefly been a stranger.

"Aside from being just an ever-present, caring spouse, she is now a highly regarded friend to almost everyone who works here," he said.

Dr. Owen Cosgrove, Phillips' minister at Northside Church of Christ, said the congregation remembered her in a prayer service Wednesday night and members provided support for the search teams.

"Our people have set out food and drinks to help anybody that's out there helping her," he said.

He added that one of the main challenges for Phillips' friends has been the lack of concrete information.

"Just not knowing is really one of the most frustrating things," he said. "She's just a sweet little person, did so much good for everybody."

Phillips is an active member of the community, and paints, writes, cooks and sews. She has appeared in several feature films, television shows and commercials, and has appeared as Lady Jane Phillips at Scarborough Renaissance Faire. She also volunteers with Alcoholics Anonymous.

“We’re anxious to help anybody any way we can. Everyone is really concerned,” Cosgrove said. “We just feel so helpless.”

Situations involving missing persons are always difficult, Williams said, especially with the very young or the elderly.

“You don’t get used to it,” he said. “I haven’t.”

Phillips’ family last saw her around 10 a.m. Monday, and one of her sons spoke with her on the phone Tuesday at 10 a.m. The family reported her missing at 12:30 a.m. Wednesday, and the sheriff’s office conducted an exhaustive search of the area surrounding her home with the help of the Texas Rangers, the Department of Public Safety, local volunteer fire departments, the Milford canine unit, and a search and rescue team, including additional search dogs out of Fort Worth.

No additional information has been uncovered and so far no valuables have been reported missing from Phillips’ home, Williams said.

Phillips is 5 feet tall, weighs 115 pounds, has grey hair, glasses and brown spots on her forehead. Her vehicle was found still at her home, and a check of Waxahachie and Ennis hospitals did not turn anything up.

Anyone with any information is asked to contact Williams or Tims at (972) 937-6060.