

BONNER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

February 13, 2012

On January 6, 2012, Bonner County Sheriff's Detectives received information concerning a possible homicide.

At the time, it was alleged that a 19 year old, white, male, had been picked up in the Hope area and driven to the Cocolalla area on the pretense of attending a party. During the course of the evening, the 19 year old male was taken out into a treed area and shot twice. The suspects then transported the victim from the Cocolalla area to an unknown location where he was buried.

Based on the information developed during the course of this investigation, numerous search warrants were obtained, locations searched, and several motorized vehicles and firearms were seized. Three suspects, identified as Austin Thrasher, 19 years old; Austin Thrasher's wife, Jennifer Dunnagan Thrasher, 22 years old, and Christopher Garlin, 19 years old. All three suspects are Bonner County residents. All three, over subsequent years, have resided in the Cocolalla and Clark Fork areas.

These individuals were all identified as suspects involved in this homicide. At the time of this investigation, all three suspects were in custody on an unrelated charge of Burglary and Possession of Stolen Property charges. The Thrashers and Garlin were involved in the Pawn Now burglary that was investigated by the ATF and the Ponderay Police Department. The bond amount for the Pawn Now burglary was set at \$100,000 each.

Through further investigation, Detectives were able to locate the body of Michael Wyatt Smith who had been buried in a shallow grave on a parcel of property off of Wellington Road in the Rapid Lightening area.

Michael Wyatt Smith was reported missing on September 15, 2011, from a residence located on the Hope Peninsula. He was last seen on September 13, 2011, at 11:00 p.m. walking down Peninsula Road in Hope, Idaho. A Missing Person report was filed with the Bonner County Sheriff's Office and Michael Wyatt Smith was entered as a Missing Person into NCIC on September 15, 2011. Smith had no contact with any family or friends after September 13, 2011.

Positive identification of the remains of Michael Wyatt Smith were made through an autopsy. Autopsy results showed the victim died as the result of two fatal gunshot wounds. Next of kin located in California were notified on February 8, 2012. Austin Thrasher has been charged with First Degree Murder; Jennifer Dunnagan Thrasher has been charged with Accessory to Murder; and Christopher Garlin has been charged with Accessory to Murder.