



## Two people charged in elder abuse case of 71-year-old woman

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David Harris | Flint Journal

**GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan** — Weighing just 64 pounds with only part of a fruit peel in her stomach, 71-year-old Joann Christopher died in March on the couch of an unlicensed adult foster care home in Mt. Morris Township.

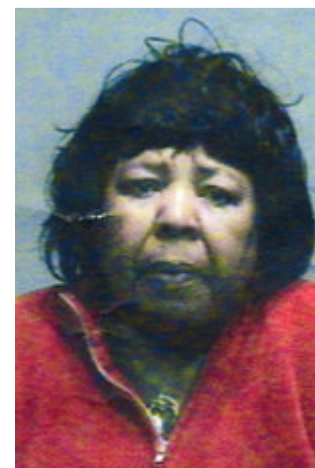
Now, the two women responsible for caring for Christopher are charged with felony murder and vulnerable adult abuse. Mary Chapman, 70, of Holly Township, and her granddaughter Vamerolyn Chapman, 34, of Mt. Morris Township, are facing charges in the death of Joann Christopher, 71.

Authorities allege that the Chapmans, who were paid to take care of Christopher in their home, neglected their duties, which led to her death. The two were arrested on Wednesday and are lodged in the Genesee County Jail.

“Joann Christopher, regardless of her age, deserves justice,” said Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell. “I think this case should shock the conscience of a society that values the elderly.”

Christopher was found dead on March 2 on the couch of a home on West Stanley Road in Mt. Morris Township. The house was an unlicensed adult foster care home, Pickell said.

An autopsy showed she died of severe bed sores, malnutrition and dehydration, Pickell said. Christopher had been dead 2-4 hours before 911 was called.



Mary Chapman



Neither had an attorney on file. An attorney who has represented Mary Chapman in the past said he no longer represented her. The state Department of Human Resources declined comment on the case.

Christopher came under the care of Mary Chapman around 2005. Chapman was paid \$800 a month by a court appointed guardian to take care of Christopher. Chapman then moved the woman to Vamerolyn Chapman in Mt. Morris Township in late 2009. Mary Chapman paid her granddaughter \$100 a week to take care of Christopher, Pickell said.

Vamerolyn Chapman

Christopher never received medical attention. On February 28, Mary Chapman called the guardian and said Christopher was not eating, Pickell said. Christopher was dead three days later.

Pickell called the death a "tragic case."

"These elderly people don't have a voice," Pickell said. "In essence, it's like being in a prison camp."

Authorities also are investigating the death of a 91-year-old woman who died on March 9 at an adult foster care home on Beard Street in Flint on March 9. Pickell said that case remains under investigation.

There's been a long history of issues with adult foster care homes operated by Mary Chapman. The state revoked Mary Chapman's license in 2005 after a state Department of Human Services investigation found numerous instances of residents wandering away from her Holly Township home, including one in which a resident died after being hit by a car.

Pickell said at one time Mary Chapman was operating 14 homes in Genesee County. The elder abuse task force, which handled the case, removed 10 women from the various homes in March, Pickell said.

Chapman would move around her residents to elude authorities, Pickell said.

"What it effectively does is shutdown a woman that was trafficking elderly people," Pickell said.

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