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Five charged in land fraud scheme

By Melissa Cassutt

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The Florida Department of Law Enforcement announced the indictment of five Miramar, Fla. residents who allegedly used fraudulent titles to obtain property in Charlotte, Collier and Lee County.

Howard Henry, 45; Sheila W. Henry, 48; Quintin Henry, 23; and Tysha Wiggins, 28; all of Miramar were charged with mail fraud and wire fraud. Omar Dalberry, 24, also of Miramar, was charged with mail fraud.

The defendants are suspected of searching the internet for properties with unpaid taxes to find property held by a deceased owner. They then allegedly created fraudulent deeds to obtain the land to resell. At least 18 properties were bought this way, totaling \$576,000.

The scheme started in 2004 and lasted about a year, according to the indictment.

Charlie Green, Lee County Clerk of Courts, said property schemes become more common in a hot real estate market as buyers are quick to lay down money without checking to see if the owner is legit.

"A lot of people get caught up," Green said. "If somebody wants to cheat you, chances are there is a way for them to do that. You can not stop crime, but you can limit it's impact on you."

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