

Missing swimmer's body found

By Chris Paschenko

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GALVESTON — A Dickinson search and recovery group on Friday found the body of a missing tourist believed to have drowned in Tuesday's rough surf.

About 10:40 a.m., a member of Texas EquuSearch spotted the body presumed to be that of Tony Blocker, 28, of Maumelle, Ark.

As Galveston police investigated, Blocker's family formed a prayer circle at the base of the 29th Street pier.

Blocker was tentatively identified by a tattoo on his upper chest, Galveston Beach Patrol Chief Peter Davis said.

The search member found his body resting against the pier's east side, after it had apparently been carried by the current east from where Blocker was last seen about 3 p.m. Tuesday.

He was swimming with his girlfriend Eunique Powell, 27, in front of the San Luis Resort, where the family was vacationing.

Powell told authorities she was with Blocker about 40 yards from shore near 52nd Street when they were overcome by waves. Powell returned safely to the beach, but she didn't see Blocker resurface.

The Beach Patrol, Galveston police and firefighters, U.S. Coast Guard and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department searched Tuesday and Wednesday and were joined by EquuSearch on Thursday.

"This is sad for the family," EquuSearch search coordinator Carol Moyers said. "I'm glad they have their loved one to take back to Arkansas."

Ted Handley, director of The Jesse Tree of Galveston, said his social services organization had provided counseling and shelter for the family.

"I admired her (Powell's) strength after he was lost," Handley said. "She stayed levelheaded and took care of the family."

The Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office took the body from the pier at 12:18 p.m. and was conducting an autopsy Friday afternoon to determine the cause of death.

Blocker would be the island's first drowning victim of 2009. In Davis' 27 years with the Beach Patrol, only one drowning victim was never found, a man who was lost during a 1990s tropical storm.

It was fortunate Blocker was found Friday, Davis said, noting a strong storm was set to blow into Galveston from the north Friday night, which could have carried his body into the Gulf.

Lifeguards search for possible drowning victim

By Chris Paschenko

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GALVESTON — An all out search was under way Tuesday evening for an Arkansas man who hadn't surfaced from the rough surf after an afternoon swim with his girlfriend at a Galveston beach, authorities said.

Tony Blocker, 28, of Maumelle, was swimming about 40 yards from the beach in the area of 52nd Street when he went under shortly after 3 p.m., said Peter Davis, Beach Patrol chief. It is believed he has drowned, Davis said.

The man's girlfriend, Eunique Powell, 27, had trouble returning to shore in the rough surf, but she managed to escape the waves and was uninjured, Davis said.

Ten lifeguards began arriving at 3:12 p.m. and searched the water for about 90 minutes in currents that flowed easterly, Davis said.

The Coast Guard sent a helicopter to search from the air, and Galveston police, island firefighters and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department assisted, Davis said.

"His girlfriend was right there with him when he went under," Davis said. "The rip currents aren't usually that strong there."

The couple were vacationing with children at the San Luis Resort in Galveston after having driven to the island on Monday, Davis said. The children were not swimming with Blocker and Powell, Davis said.

Searchers continued combing the beach and would broaden their search east in the direction of the currents, Davis said. If Blocker wasn't found Tuesday night, the search would resume at first light, Davis said.

The Jesse Tree, a social services agency, was called to provide counseling for the family, Davis said.