In recent years, throughout Cobb County we have seen several incidents surface in which senior citizens were abused in terrible ways. The most sensational incidents have included homicide; theft of over a million dollars of an elderly woman’s assets; and a case in which elderly men and women were held captive in squalid conditions as their money and vital medications were stolen from them. Nevertheless, most of the abuse cases were not sensational, but rather sad cases in which frail, sick elderly people who live at a subsistence level suffered in silence as their meager assets, social security benefits; veteran’s benefits and medications were stolen from them.

For most, the term elder abuse congers up Hollywood-type images of senior citizens being brutalized, robbed and beaten. Undoubtedly, that kind of abuse occasionally occurs, yet it pales in frequency to incidents of financial abuse of the elderly; which is by far the most common and most under-reported form of elder abuse. It is under-reported to the police mainly because the offenders are close acquaintances, care-givers and/or family members of vulnerable elderly victims who are often embarrassed; ashamed of what those closest to them have done and fearful of retaliation or further abuse. For these reasons, local law enforcement leaders believe we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

To be sure, greater Cobb County is not unique or alone in terms of elder abuse incidents, but even one case is one case too many. This is why the Cobb Elder Abuse Task Force, which is a partnership composed of state and local law enforcement leaders, emergency medical professionals, elected officials, regulatory agency leaders, bankers, and senior citizen advocates, has come together. The collective goals of the task force include:

Raising public awareness to the problem(s) of elder abuse

Strengthening laws that protect the elderly

Strengthening the prosecution of elder abuse cases

Implementing financial monitoring and communications systems designed to protect the welfare of the elderly

Identify pockets of elder abuse and bring offenders to justice

In 2016 the Cobb Elder Abuse Task Force plans to redouble its efforts and sharpen the spear that targets all aspects of elderly abuse.