

NEWS RELEASE

Seminole County Sheriff's Office arrests four and takes synthetic drugs off store shelves

SEMINOLE CO. (Jan. 14, 2014) – The Seminole County Sheriff's Office City-County Investigative Bureau today executed search warrants at four businesses suspected of selling synthetic drugs, arresting four subjects and seizing 795 packages of synthetic drugs and more than 500 items of drug paraphernalia. Synthetic drugs are marketed under a variety of different names and brands and are commonly known as "bath salts," and "K2" or "Spice."

In recent months, law enforcement officers visited convenience, liquor and tobacco stores throughout the county to ensure harmful synthetic drugs are not made available for sale. During the visits, undercover CCIB agents purchased samples of suspected synthetic drugs. The drugs were then analyzed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's crime lab to identify the presence of those chemicals prohibited by emergency order or by state law. Three of the samples tested positive for the prohibited chemicals.

CCIB subsequently consulted with the State Attorney's Office of the 18th Judicial Circuit and last week obtained search warrants for the following four businesses that were selling banned synthetic drugs:

- **Casselberry Liquor** located at 130 East State Road 436 in Casselberry
 - Maurice McKnight, 35, of Casselberry was charged with possession of synthetic narcotic with intent to sell, possession of bath salts and possession of a weapon by a convicted felon.
 - Agents seized 401 packages of K2, multiple pieces of drug paraphernalia, a shotgun, a handgun, and a small amount of bath salts and cocaine.
- **Citgo** located at 1000 East Altamonte Drive in Altamonte Springs
 - Derick Pagan-Cordova, 55, of Altamonte Springs was charged with possession of synthetic narcotic with intent to sell and possession of drug equipment.
 - Agents seized 35 packages of K2 and multiple pieces of drug paraphernalia.
- **Chuluota Grocery** located at 95 East 7th Street #109 in Chuluota
 - Maged Youssef, 41, of Orlando was charged with possession of synthetic narcotic and possession with the intent to sell.
 - Agents seized 141 packages of K2.
- **The Tobacco and Beer Outlet** at 160 W SR 434 in Winter Springs.
 - Nereida Pagan, 46, of Casselberry was charged with selling an imitation drug and possession of drug equipment.
 - Agents seized 218 packages of K2 and multiple pieces of drug paraphernalia.
 - While this store sold synthetic drugs that did not test positive for the banned chemicals, the products are considered imitation controlled substances, and were sold together with drug paraphernalia, which is a felony.

The SCSO plans to visit businesses on an ongoing basis to ensure compliance with the ban on synthetic drugs, and will work with the State Attorney's Office to aggressively prosecute violators. The drugs are frequently labeled as being "all natural" or "a safe alternative," but can be powerful stimulants that can cause psychotic episodes, hallucinations, seizures, paranoia, tremors, and other serious medical reactions. The products are believed to be produced as substitutes for marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines.

Members of the community who have the synthetic drugs in their possession may turn in the products, no questions asked, at drug drop off boxes located at each local law enforcement agency. A list of locations can be found at www.seminolepreventioncoalition.org (go to the "Pitch your Pills" tab).

Please do not respond to this email as the account is not monitored. For more information contact:

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