

## Two arrested in housing rental scam - 05/03/2012

Seminole Co. (5/3/12)- The Seminole County Sheriff's Office yesterday arrested Natash a Ortiz, 28, of Winter Park, and David Rivas, 27, of Orlando, on charges of burglary, grand larceny and fraud. Ortiz and Rivas are believed to have orchestrated a scam in which they rented out two Winter Park homes that did not belong to them, stealing more than \$2,700 from unknowing renters.

The Sheriff's Office investigation began in February after one of the victims reported their concerns to the Seminole Financial Crime Task Force. Investigators believe that Ortiz and Rivas identified 7540 Dockside Street and 1493 Hyde Park Drive in Winter Park as foreclosed properties and then broke into the residences and changed the locks. They then advertised the homes for sale on Craig's list and posted "For Rent" signs in the yards.

Ortiz posed as a realtor for Sunrise Property Management and met with families who were interested in renting the properties. She then collected cash for a security deposit and the first month's rent for the residences. Ortiz even provided the renters with a receipt and a rental contract. Ortiz provided a false name to the victims and Sunrise Property Management does not exist. Families moved in to both properties before realizing they were not authorized to live there.

Ortiz and Rivas were booked into the John E. Polk Correctional Facility. Investigators are asking the public to view their photos. Anyone who may have rented other properties from these individuals is asked to contact the Seminole County Sheriff's Office at 407-665-6650.

Investigators caution the public to protect themselves from rental scams by taking the following steps:

- Verify the ownership of a rental property through the property appraisers office;
- Verify the authenticity of a property management company;
- Check with the Department of Business and Regulation to ensure your realtor is properly licensed (searches can be done online at [www.myfloridalicense.com](http://www.myfloridalicense.com)); and
- If a rental property is bank-owned, request proof of a contract between the bank and the rental management company.