



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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Prepared by: Shannon Martin
Phone and Email: 386-281-9733; martin@flaglersheriff.com
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Palm Coast Man Charged with Thirty Counts of Possession of Child Pornography Commits Suicide Minutes Before Sentencing

This morning, Flagler County dispatchers received a call from a male, later identified as Mario Arter (DOB: 5/19/1973), stating that he was sitting inside his truck in the parking lot of the Kim C. Hammond Justice Center and that deputies would find his remains there.

The Bunnell Police Department (BPD), Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO), and Sheriff Rick Staly responded to the location and found Arter unresponsive in the driver's seat. Emergency Medical Services arrived on the scene and prepared to deliver life-saving measures; however, Arter was pronounced dead at the scene from an apparent gunshot wound to the head.

The BPD then requested that FCSO take over the scene and conduct the death investigation. Further investigation revealed that Arter was at the courthouse for a 10:00 AM sentencing hearing in connection to his May 2020 arrest when he was charged with thirty felony counts of Possession of Images of Sexual Performance by a Child.

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office Cyber Crimes Unit began investigating Arter after receiving a Cyber Tip from Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) in December of 2019. A lengthy investigation led to a search warrant being executed at his residence in April of 2020. During the search, several electronic devices were seized and a forensic analysis of the devices was conducted which found numerous images and videos of child pornography.

On April 30, 2020, an arrest warrant was signed for 46-year-old Mario Arnez Arter for 30 counts of Possession of Images of the Sexual Performance by a Child. On May 9, 2020, Arter was located by the Florida Highway Patrol and taken into custody.

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1769 East Moody Blvd., Bunnell, FL 32110

386-437-4116 – Fax 386-586-4888

Mailing: P.O. Box 879, Bunnell, FL 32110

www.flaglersheriff.com

“It is unfortunate that rather than accept responsibility for his crimes Arter decided to take his own life,” Sheriff Staly said. “Our Cybercrimes Unit did an excellent job building a strong case against Arter and he knew he was likely going to prison. It is unfortunate this was the solution he chose, which will again affect innocent people.”

The FCSO wants residents to know that suicide is never the answer and that there are many resources available to help those who wish to seek it out, especially in your darkest moments. If you or someone you know needs help you can contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or Flagler Life Line resources by clicking [here](#).

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