



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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

NEWS RELEASE

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"See Something, Say Something" and Proactive Policing Leads to Arrests – Juvenile Found with Two Guns, One Stolen, and Drugs

On Sunday, September 19, 2021, the Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) responded to a call about a fireworks complaint in Palm Coast. Deputies observed active fireworks going off near the Indian Trails Sports Complex (ITSC). Deputies went to ITSC and observed a vehicle in the parking lot with two occupants, later identified as Justin Brown (DOB: 12/12/2001), the driver, and Amarilis Merino (DOB: 10/11/2003), the passenger.



L: Justin Brown (DOB: 12/12/2001) and R: Amarilis Merino (DOB: 10/11/2003)

When deputies approached the vehicle an odor of marijuana was detected and a green leafy substance was observed near the center console. Brown and Merino were asked if there were any drugs in the vehicle and they stated no, but due to the odor, they were advised that a probable cause search was going to be conducted on the vehicle. Brown refused to exit the vehicle and was advised by deputies that he was being lawfully and ordered to exit.

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During the search of the vehicle, a glass pipe and container of marijuana were located with hashish oil, along with a loaded firearm in the center glove compartment. As the search continued it was discovered that Merino's purse contained another firearm with ammo. The Flagler County Communications Center advised that the firearm found in Merino's purse was reported stolen in Clay County.

Upon questioning, Merino advised the firearms belonged to her along with the drug paraphernalia found in the vehicle. Brown stated he did not know there were firearms in the vehicle or who they belonged to. Brown stated the vehicle belonged to his mother who permitted him to use it.

Brown and Merino are no strangers to law enforcement. Brown's criminal history started in 2017 in Flagler County for Violation of Probation, Domestic Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Domestic Battery, and Possession of Marijuana Under 20 Grams in Volusia County. Merino's criminal history started in 2016 in Volusia County for Battery, an Out of County Warrant in Duval County and she was previously arrested by the Cocoa Police Department in 2020 for Burglary and Petit Theft.

"The system has failed these two young criminals," Sheriff Staly said. "This girl's criminal history started when she was only 13 and she's had many chances to turn her life around but instead she is escalating her criminal behavior and now has two guns, one of which was stolen. Another great job by our deputies looking beyond the initial call."

Brown and Merino were placed under arrest and transported to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility. Brown was arrested for Possession of Marijuana under 20 Grams, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, and Possession of Hashish Oil. He's being held on a \$3,500 bond.

Merino was arrested for two counts of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm Under age 18, Grand Theft of a Firearm, Possession of Marijuana Under 20 Grams, and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. After being processed at the jail she was transferred to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

View Bodycam Here: <https://youtu.be/kD869-KOXYA>

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