



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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

NEWS RELEASE

Date: Tuesday, May 1, 2018

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FSA Operation Spring Cleaning Helps Keep Floridians Safe

Sheriff Rick Staly hosted a joint press conference with Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood and Putnam County Sheriff Gator DeLoach on Tuesday afternoon to discuss Operation Spring Cleaning, a strategic initiative in 27 Florida counties hosted by the Florida Sheriff's Association (FSA) that focused on the investigation and subsequent arrest of those manufacturing, delivering or trafficking controlled substances. During this operation, 45 drug dealers were arrested or charged in Flagler County, over ten pounds of controlled substances were confiscated, and 14 firearms were seized during Operation Spring Cleaning.



"The widespread use of controlled substances has devastated communities across our great state," said FSA President and Walton County Sheriff Michael Adkinson. "Enforcing controlled substance policies under Florida Statute 893.03 is a top priority for law enforcement officers to keep families and local communities safe."

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Florida's medical examiners reported 704 people died of Fentanyl-related overdoses in the first half of 2016, which led to the passing of enhanced penalties for drug dealers and traffickers as seen in Florida House Bill 477 in 2017. Since many dealers sell various types of drugs, Operation Spring Cleaning focused on capturing sales and trafficking related to highly abused controlled substances. The following are the specific total numbers for Flagler County:

- 45 persons arrested or charged for trafficking in controlled substances listed under Florida Statute 893.03/sale and delivery
- 4,753 grams of controlled substances confiscated
- 14 firearms seized
- 3 arrest for unlawful possession of a firearm by a convicted felon
- \$57,778 seized drug proceeds

“Our Special Investigations Unit and Community Policing Division are working tirelessly to get this poison off the streets and the dealers behind bars,” Sheriff Rick Staly said. “Forty-five people have been charged since the start of this operation on October 1, 2017, two of which are juveniles under 18-years-old. Nearly ten-and-a-half pounds of illegal narcotics have been removed from the community and over \$57,000 in drug dealer assets has been seized. Our team is getting results.”

Notable cases related to the Spring Cleaning operation in Flagler County are highlighted below.

A traffic stop was conducted on November 6, 2017, and Joseph Colon was arrested and charged with Trafficking in Hydromorphone, Possession of Heroin, Crack Cocaine and Alprazolam with intent to distribute, Possession of Oxycodone, and Driving with a Suspended License. On February 21, while Colon was still in custody at the Flagler County Detention Facility, a Grand Jury indicted Colon on the charge of 1st Degree Murder in the overdose death of Savannah DeAngelis under the new Florida State Statute 782.04 that allows drug dealers to be charged with murder resulting from an overdose death.

Charles Eugene Rushing-Griffen was arrested on December 15, 2017, and charged with robbery with a deadly weapon, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and driving with a suspended license after robbing the Shell gas station clerk at 320 Palm Coast Parkway at gunpoint. Additional charges were later added for an armed robbery of Terranova's Pizzeria in Bunnell and an attempted robbery of a Mobil gas station in Palm Coast. On February 21, Rushing-Griffen pleaded to 30 years in prison for the charges.

Morgan Byrnes was the focus of a investigation in which Cannabis was purchased from Byrnes during an undercover operation. A Search Warrant was executed on February 1 at Byrnes' residence. During the Search Warrant, Byrnes, a convicted felon, was found to be in possession of a large quantity of Cannabis along with 12 firearms. Byrnes was arrested, the firearms were seized, and Byrnes forfeited \$8,433 in suspected drug proceeds to the Flagler County Sheriff's Office.

Felix Vega was determined to be a co-conspirator with Byrnes. A Search Warrant was executed on March 1 at Vega's residence. During the Search Warrant, Vega was found to be in possession of approximately 5.3 pounds of Cannabis, 1.5 pounds of THC Hash Oil, a highly concentrated form of

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THC, and was subsequently arrested. SIU Detectives also seized \$46,222 worth of suspected drug proceeds from Vega.

Operation Spring Cleaning contributes to two of the FSA business operations goals: to foster effective law enforcement and crime prevention and to promote the activities of Sheriffs. The results of this task force operation have led to many successful closed investigations of drug trafficking in the state of Florida.

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The Florida Sheriffs Association is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation made up of the Sheriffs of Florida, approximately 3,500 business leaders and 70,000 citizens throughout the state. Founded in 1893, FSA has steadfastly served the citizens of Florida by supporting the needs of the state's law enforcement community. Through the Florida Sheriffs Association, Sheriffs are given a forum to address lawmakers to push for positive changes in Florida's public safety arena. FSA also provides Sheriffs' Offices much-needed programs such as affordable training, special task forces and legislative and legal services. Dedicated to the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the development of lawful, productive citizens, FSA has established and funded the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches with facilities throughout the state to help restore hope, fulfill dreams, and prepare boys and girls for the future. It has grown to be one of the largest and most successful state law enforcement associations in the nation. For more information on the Florida Sheriffs Association, visit www.flsheriffs.org.

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