

Traffic Stop Leads To Drug Arrest

On October 22, 2015, while on routine patrol, Deputy Blake Stokes of the Echols County Sheriff's Office observed a burgundy Monte Carlo traveling on Hwy 129 N at a high rate of speed. Deputy Stokes clocked the Monte Carlo's speed at 74 miles per hour in a 55 mile per hour speed zone. Deputy Stokes initiated a traffic stop and made contact with the driver, who was identified as 25 year old Ricardo Vandell Smith of Clermont, FL. Deputy Stokes noticed the driver fumbling around looking for his license, Deputy Stokes also noticed an abundance of air fresheners in the vehicle. During the traffic stop, Smith lit a cigarette and appeared to be very nervous. Smith could not produce a driver's license. Deputy Stokes then spoke with the passenger, who was identified as 18 year old Maleak Williams of Clermont, FL. Stokes noted William's nervous demeanor as well. Stokes asked Smith and Williams if there was anything illegal in the vehicle to which they replied no. Deputy Stokes asked Smith for consent to search the car to which he agreed and then changed his mind and stated no, that it was his sister's car. Deputy Stokes then advised that he was going to deploy his K-9 Spike to conduct a free air search of the vehicle. The K-9 dog alerted with a positive indication to the odor of possible narcotics in the vehicle. Deputy Stokes removed the passenger from the vehicle and began a search of the vehicles interior. In the trunk of the vehicle, Deputy Stokes noticed a strong odor of marijuana emanating from the vehicle. A search of a suit case and a metal box located within the truck resulted to the finding of several mason jars full of suspected marijuana. Also found was a digital scale which is commonly used in the distribution of illegal narcotics. Williams later claimed possession of all of the marijuana located in the vehicle and was charged with felony possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and felony use of a communication device to facilitate a drug transaction. Williams was transported to Lowndes County jail for processing.