

# LOCAL PROFESSIONALS ARRESTED FOR SEX STING WITH MINORS

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A professional golfer, a teacher and several college students were among 40 suspected of traveling to meet minors for sex in an undercover sting in Osceola County, the Sheriff's Office said Tuesday. The arrests were the result of a weeklong, undercover operation led by the Osceola County Sheriff's Office, dubbed "Operation Red Cheeks." The operation ran from Jan. 8 through Monday. Undercover detectives posed as children, or as parents or guardians, to chat online with the suspects, who traveled to an arranged meeting location in Osceola County for sex with a child, deputies said. The Sheriff's Office said some of the suspects sent pornographic images to undercover detectives during the online sting, and some brought alcohol or drugs and other items to the meetings.

Among those arrested:

\*Professional Golfer Stephen Wesley Thomas, 55. The PGA's website says the Tupelo, Miss., has played in 44 PGA Tour events and 34 on the Champions Tour. He has three career top-10 finishes.

His arrest affidavit states Thomas thought he was chatting with a woman about sex with her 13-year-old daughter. He agreed to meet the teen for sex, deputies say, and sent photos of himself golfing.

Investigators searched Thomas' sport utility vehicle after his arrest, the affidavit states, finding three condoms, two packages of chocolate pudding and a bottle of honey. Deputies say he confessed.

\*Gainesville swim coach Bryan Woodward, 29. The Gainesville Sun reported last week Woodward coached youths for the Gator Swim Club, a private club unaffiliated with the University of Florida.

According to his arrest affidavit, Woodward told an undercover posing as a child online that "younger girls turn me on," discussed graphic sex acts and brought candy with him to meet the "child."

\*Students Marvin Bell, 20, Lucas Clarke, 18, Josean Javier Gaston, 22, Justin Joseph Hall, 30, Cornellus Hunt, 29, Kegan Ritchie, 22, Frederick Adams, 18, Samer Al-Hubaydi, 26, and Winston Stephens, 20.

According to the Sheriff's Office, Clarke attends the Golf Academy of America, Al-Hubaydi attends Embry-Riddle and Stephens attends Full Sail. Adams, deputies say, is still in high school.

An Embry-Riddle spokesman confirmed Al-Hubaydi's name and birth date match a first-year student. The university will review his student status "taking into account the facts of the case or the outcome."

\*Eighth grade teacher Alexander Roy, 32. According to the St. Lucie County School Board, Roy works as a math teacher at Manatee Academy on Heatherwood Boulevard in Port St. Lucie.

"As per school board policy, this employee will be placed on administrative leave away from students until the completion of any potential adjudication," said school board spokeswoman Janice Karst.

\*Soldier Shane Daniel Cousins, 26. The Sheriff's Office said Cousins is a member of the U.S. Army Reserves who lives in Kissimmee. His Facebook page says he attended Santa Fe College.

\*Retired beekeeper Dell Rio Highsmith, 70. The Sheriff's Office said Highsmith is a resident of Fargo, Ga. Authorities also arrested an IT professional and a construction worker, among others.

Agencies involved in the sting included the Citrus, Lake, Orange, Sumter, Polk, Hardee and Manatee sheriff's offices and Ocoee, Kissimmee, Sanford, Orlando, Longwood and Casselberry police.

The suspects face a variety of charges, including traveling to seduce a child to commit sex acts, using a computer to solicit a child or parent and, for some, attempted lewd and lascivious battery of a child.

"These predators stalk the cyber community looking for children," said Osceola Sheriff Bob Hansell, adding that because of the sting, "at a minimum, 40 children did not fall prey to a sexual deviant."

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