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Mercer County Narcotics Task Force Dismantles Major Marijuana Distribution Ring in Hightstown

More than \$900,000 in marijuana products seized

HIGHTSTOWN -- Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri announced today that an investigation by the Mercer County Narcotics Task Force concluded recently with one arrest, and the seizure of more than \$900,000 in high-grade marijuana products.

On Thursday, October 19, 2017, the Hightstown Fire Department and Hightstown Police Department were dispatched to 109 Mercer Street for a fire alarm. Fire and police personnel inspected the interior of the building to ensure that there were no fire hazards. Upon entering the building, police detected a strong odor of raw marijuana emanating from inside. A search warrant was obtained and executed on October 20 at the address.

In addition to 80 pounds of bulk marijuana and \$2,449 in cash, officers seized a plethora of products containing THC, including:

- 808 energy drinks
- 3,489 pill bottles containing raw marijuana (high-grade designer marijuana)
- 488 bags of assorted edible THC products (hemp gummies, trail mix, honey bars, jolly rockets, etc.)
- 2,144 vials of THC oil

- 384 jars of THC powder
- 122 jars of THC ointment
- 27 bottles of THC medical cream
- 7 boxes of massage oil
- 40 jars of relief balm
- 3 boxes of dog biscuits
- 26 boxes of PMS relief
- 85 jars of marijuana wax
- 31 jars of bath salts
- 21 boxes of THC pretzels
- Lowell smokes

Onofri stated that, in total, the seized marijuana products have an approximate street value of more than \$900,000.

Officers with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, the Mercer County Sheriff's Office, and the Hamilton, Hightstown and Trenton police, under the command of the prosecutor's Special Investigations Unit, assisted with the investigation.

During the course of the investigation, Neil E. Schloss was identified as the owner/operator of CannaSence, a supplier of high-grade marijuana products. The investigation indicated that orders for marijuana products were being placed by customers utilizing a CannaSence website and shipped from 109 Mercer Street via the U.S. Postal Service.

"The market for marijuana edibles has dramatically increased as medical cannabis legalization has spread across the country," Onofri said. "The fact that they are a very tantalizing, tempting way for people to experiment poses even greater risks to keeping marijuana out of the hands of children and teens. Taken in large doses, marijuana edibles can lead to anxiety attacks, paranoia and hallucinations, and several reports have found that respiratory insufficiency can also be a major side effect in young children."

Additionally, members of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crimes Unit served court orders freezing approximately 26 bank accounts totaling approximately \$777,900 belonging to Schloss and his associates.

Schloss, age 46, of Millstone Township, is charged with maintaining and operating a marijuana manufacturing facility, possession of marijuana over 50 grams, possession with the intent to distribute, a first-degree offense, possession with the intent to distribute within

1,000 feet of a school and possession with the intent to distribute within 500 feet of public housing. The first-degree offense carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in state prison.

Schloss was released from the correction center pending future court appearances.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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