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2 charged with sex trafficking West Palm Beach runaway girl

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Mandi Lynn Bowman faces federal charges including sex trafficking a child, punishable by up to 40 years in prison, and enticing a minor to engage in a commercial sex act, punishable by a minimum 10 years in prison and up to life.

PBSO

A man and a woman face up to life imprisonment on charges of sex-trafficking a runaway minor, after quick work by West Palm Beach police, who found the young girl offering prostitution services at a hotel.

The investigation began Thursday, after the girl's stepfather reported her missing and possibly engaged in prostitution, according to a federal arrest affidavit filed Monday.

The girl had disappeared from home a few days before, and the man accused of sex trafficking found her at a convenience store, gave her his phone number then lured her into the world of prostitution, the affidavit says.

After being contacted by the stepfather, West Palm Beach police searched online escort ads on backpage.com and found what appeared to be a listing for the missing girl, who was born in 1997, making her either 14 or 15 years old, according to the affidavit.

An undercover officer posing as a "john" called the number in the ad on Thursday and spoke to the girl, who told him to meet her at the Days Inn on 45th Street, near Interstate 95. The officers met the girl in the parking lot and explained their investigation.

That's when the girl told officers how she met her "pimp" — Rashad Emon Clark, 33, and one of his prostitutes, Mandi Lynn Bowman, 22 — the affidavit says. Both Clark, who goes by the street name "Shagg Dog," and Bowman have listed past addresses in West Palm Beach, records show.

South Florida is considered by law enforcement officials to be a hot spot for sex trafficking because of its international airports and ports, and its tourism-based economy. No single agency keeps track of the number of girls and women who end up being trafficked, but it is estimated to be a \$32 billion business nationally.

During the girl's first meeting with Clark at the convenience store, "Clark discussed with the juvenile prostitution activities at that time and had two adult prostitutes in the vehicle with him. The

juvenile contacted Clark by cellular phone the following day, and Clark picked up the juvenile and drove her to the Days Inn," the affidavit says.

Then Clark had sex with the girl, and paid her \$40, according to the affidavit. He then explained how much money she could make for various sex acts — \$250 an hour or more — and how much of that he would keep.

"Clark also advised the juvenile victim that she had to choose money or friends," the affidavit says. Then Clark dropped her off at another location.

The following day, Thursday, Clark brought the girl to the hotel, had sex with her and supplied her with condoms, the affidavit says. Clark told Bowman to teach the girl the ways of a prostitute.

"Bowman taught the juvenile how to set up and schedule appointments, and how to negotiate prices with johns," the affidavit says.

The girl had sex with one man, and another man performed a sex act in her presence, before police found her, according to the affidavit.

Clark and Bowman face federal charges that carry hefty prison terms. Each is charged with sex trafficking a child, punishable by up to 40 years in prison, and enticing a minor to engage in a commercial sex act, punishable by a minimum 10 years in prison and up to life.

Ask questions if your child has unexplained cash, a hotel key or a phone or stash of clothing you did not buy.

Take notice if your child exhibits abnormal behavior; is unusually fearful, anxious, depressed, paranoid or tense; is confused about his or her whereabouts; shows inconsistencies in his or her story; has been "branded" by a trafficker with something like a tattoo of the trafficker's name; or has unexplained cuts or bruises.

A trafficked child may be a runaway, truant, have a sexually explicit online profile or an interest in age-inappropriate relationships with adults.

To report human trafficking, contact local law enforcement or the confidential 24-hour National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline, 888-373-7888.

Source: Broward Human Trafficking Coalition, Polaris Project, National Human Trafficking Resource Center Human-trafficking legislation

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