



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Paul Blackman

400 S. Eucalyptus St., Sebring FL 33870
863-402-7200 | www.highlandssheriff.org



Scott Dressel, Public Information Officer
863-402-7841 | rdressel@highlandssheriff.org

PRESS RELEASE: April 17, 2017

207.5 pounds of marijuana found in Avon Park home

AVON PARK -- What started out as a call about a suspicious car parked in front of an Avon Park home ended up with 207.5 pounds of packaged marijuana being seized and three people in jail early Easter morning.

Deputies responded to 598 E. Lakeview Drive in Avon Park at 11:30 p.m. Saturday, April 15 after the homeowner called to say there was a car parked at the house that was not supposed to be there. The homeowner was concerned that the house was being burglarized. When deputies arrived they could see and hear people moving around inside the home. After they knocked on the door, 39-year-old Erika Berrien of Orlando answered. While they were talking to Berrien, deputies said there was an overwhelming smell of fresh marijuana wafting out the partially opened door. They also noticed that Berrien had a leafy, green, sticky substance all over her fingers.

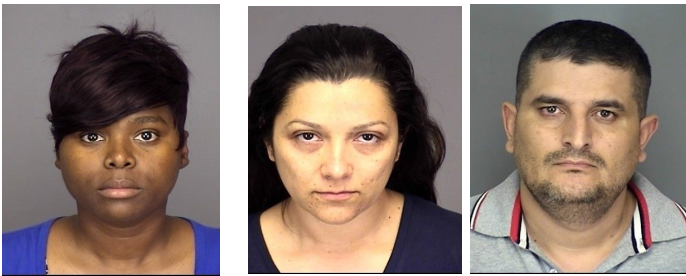
When they entered the home, deputies found a large supply of marijuana in vacuum-sealed packages that was being broken down into smaller amounts for sale on the street. The marijuana was on counter tops as well as on the floor in plastic shopping bags and plastic food containers, some of which were open. The total amount of marijuana found inside the home was 207.5 pounds.

Also inside the home were 35-year-old Karina Ivete Chavira and 34-year-old Jesus Ivan Ornelas, both of whom recently arrived from Mexico. There were also three children -- ages 12, 9 and 2.

Deputies eventually learned that Berrien is a relative of the homeowner. She and Ornelas were charged with trafficking in marijuana in excess of 25 pounds and manufacturing/delivering marijuana. Chavira was charged with possession of more than 20 grams of marijuana.

All three were also charged with three counts cruelty towards a child. The children were turned over to the Department of Children and Families and placed into foster care.

Note: All arrests do not lead to convictions. Everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.



(From left) Berrien, Chavira, Ornelas