



City of Arts & Innovation

PRESS RELEASE

Police Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RIVERSIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS TARGETING TWO ILLEGAL “INTERNET CAFÉS”

Riverside, CA – On January 12th and January 13th, 2017, members of the Riverside Police Department's Special Investigations Bureau Vice Unit were assisted by Riverside Police Department's Metro Unit, Special Investigations Bureau Narcotics Unit, and Problem Oriented Police Officers (POP) from the West, Central, and North Neighborhood Policing Centers in the service of two search warrants for illegal gambling businesses being operated as “Internet Cafés.” In addition, agents from the State of California Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC), and State of California Department of Justice, Bureau of Gambling Control (DOJ) assisted in the investigations.

A business located at 9244 Magnolia Ave claiming to be a debt collection agency had 17 computers with “Vegas Style” video gambling games. The owner of the business, Steve Helland, was present during the search warrant and was arrested for falsifying documents and running an illegal gambling operation. There were three patrons inside during the search warrant and all three were issued citations for playing illegal “Vegas style” computer games. All computers were collected as evidence.



A business located at 3726 Van Buren Blvd. claiming to be copy, fax and internet access business had three computers with "Vegas Style" video gambling games. On November 30, 2016 this location was the target of a search warrant for the same offense and 17 computers were collected for evidence on that date. Since that time, the business has continued to operate as an illegal gambling operation. Employee Christina Perez, who was present during the service of both search warrants, was arrested for conspiracy, running an illegal gambling operation, and possession of illegal narcotics. All computers were collected as evidence.

Prior to the service of the search warrants, vice detectives conducted numerous undercover operations which identified and documented the illegal activity that occurred within the businesses. Their investigation revealed evidence of patrons playing computer game programs that simulated the look and feel of a slot machine or similar game of chance. Patrons were then paid cash from the employees of the businesses for their winnings.

On June 25, 2015, The California Supreme Court ruled that computerized "sweepstakes" games offered at Internet cafes are the equivalent of slot machines that are illegal under Penal Code 330.1. These operations are the result of the Riverside Police Department's continuing efforts to combat illegal gambling within the City of Riverside.



Owner of 9244 Magnolia
Steve Helland



Employee at 3726 Van Buren
Christina Perez