



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

August 4, 2021

Chatham County Police Department Arrests Two In Connection with Case of Previously Missing Child

Third Suspect Remains at Large

Chatham County, GA (August 4, 2021) — The Chatham County Police Department has arrested two women in connection with the case of a 12-year-old runaway who became the subject of an intense law enforcement search in May. A third suspect in the case remains at large.

On Monday, August 2, 2021, Chatham County Police Department detectives served warrants on 46-year-old Gwendolyn Smith and 18-year-old Denasha Jones. The pair are each charged with one count of Contributing to the Delinquency, Unruliness, or Deprivation of a Minor, along with one count of Obstructing or Hindering Law Enforcement Officers, and one count of Interference with Custody. All of the charges are misdemeanors.

Detectives are continuing to search for 51-year-old Andy Steward. When he is located, he will also be charged with one count of Contributing to the Delinquency, Unruliness, or Deprivation of a Minor, along with one count of Obstructing or Hindering Law Enforcement Officers, and one count of Interference with Custody. All of the charges are misdemeanors.

The charges stem from the case of a 12-year-old girl who was reported as a runaway on May 17, 2021. A search began for the child that included media notification and social media posts. As days passed with police unable to verify the child's whereabouts or whether she was safe, concern grew and efforts intensified. Police from multiple local agencies canvassed neighborhoods, went door-to-door asking for information, and continued to ask the public and the media for their assistance in finding the child. The child's parents and pastor also made public pleas for her safe return. She was located late on the night of May 27, 2021.

Detectives believe Smith, Jones, and Steward all knew the 12-year-old's whereabouts for a number of days during the very public search, and took specific actions to keep law enforcement from locating her.

Anyone who has information that can lead police to the third suspect in this case -- 51-year-old Andy Steward -- is asked to call Chatham County Police Department detectives at 912-651-4717.

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