

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 16, 2019

Southern Pines Police Department Announces an Arrest and Search for Wanted Felon in an Armed Robbery Incident

Southern Pines, North Carolina – On July 28, 2019, at 5:40 pm, an armed robbery occurred at Zales Jewelers located in Pinecrest Plaza, 10205 Highway 15/501 in Southern Pines. At the time of this robbery, two employees were working in the store. A black male, upon entering the store, pointed a firearm at one victim and demanded that the contents of the ring counter be placed in a bag. The suspect then moved the employee to a bathroom along with a second employee, and ordered the employees to secure themselves with nylon ties that were brought by the suspect. The armed suspect fled the store to a waiting vehicle, with numerous rings valued in excess of \$300,000.00.

On July 30, 2019, less than 48 hours following this robbery, officers from the Southern Pines Police Department located one robbery suspect in Laurinburg, North Carolina, and with the assistance of the Laurinburg Police Department, **Gilbert Smith**, 57 years of age, from Fayetteville, North Carolina was taken into custody without incident. Gilbert Smith was charged with Robbery with a Firearm and Possession of Stolen Property. At the time of his arrest, Gilbert Smith was in possession of property stolen from Zales on July 28, 2019. Following the arrest of Gilbert Smith, Investigators from the Southern Pines Police Department, with the assistance of the Fayetteville Police Department, executed a search warrant at the Fayetteville home of Gilbert Smith. Recovered during the search warrant of Gilbert's home were the remaining stolen property, with the exception of two rings. Gilbert Smith is presently incarcerated in the Moore County Detention Center under a \$750,000.00 secured bond.

With the aid of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Crime Scene Investigation Unit of the Horry County, South Carolina Police Department, Investigators from the Southern Pines Police Department continued their investigation in the northern counties of South Carolina. As a result of this comprehensive investigation, an arrest warrant has been issued for **Christopher Demarcus Bethea**, 42 years of age, from Hartsville, South Carolina, for the charges of Robbery with a Firearm and two counts of Second Degree Kidnaping.

Chief Bob Temme offered the following comments about this incident:

“The Southern Pines Police Department has worked tirelessly to establish and maintain outstanding working relationships with law enforcement professionals, not only locally, but throughout the country. The manner and speed in which this investigation was conducted highlights the importance of unified law enforcement efforts. It is these relationships that will ultimately bring Christopher Demarcus Bethea to justice.”

At the time of this media release, it is believed that Christopher Demarcus Bethea has fled to avoid his lawful apprehension. The Southern Pines Police Department is requesting the assistance of the community in locating Christopher Demarcus Bethea. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Southern Pines Police Department at 910-692-2732 or the Southern Pines Police Department's Crime Tip Line at 910-693-4110. Anonymous information is always welcome.

*Contact: Captain Charles Campbell
(910) 692-2732 ext. 2865*