

RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Police bust stores selling cigarettes to minors

BY SARA INÉS CALDERÓN
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Eighteen businesses in Southmost and West Brownsville were cited this week in a sting operation cracking down on places selling cigarettes to minors, police said.

Three teenagers cooperated with police to help during Kickin' a Little Ash, which was funded with a \$6,000 grant from the state.

Of the 34 stores police checked during the sting, 18 were issued a Class C misdemeanor citation for selling tobacco products to a minor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500, Brownsville police Lt. Mark Elbert said.

During the sting, police

monitored whether the store attendant asked for proper identification during a transaction, conducted in-store inspections and checked seller permits.

"What we're trying to do is just keep retailers aware that they shouldn't be selling to

minors," Elbert said, adding that the center hopes to re-apply to the grant program for more money next year.

"Keeping the youth from becoming addicted to it by making sure it's not easy to buy" is the goal of the grant program, said Elbert, also a

parent. "You got so many other things to be worrying about with your kids. Why have to worry about that one?"

Police plan to check with the local businesses at least four more times in the upcoming months, Elbert said.

"It is a preventable death," he said of cigarette smoking. "It gives parents the assurance that we're doing something about it. I don't want my daughter to be able to go out and buy cigarettes."

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Ex-county attorney released on bond

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Former Cameron County Commissioners Court counsel Charles Douglas Wright was released from jail Friday after he posted a \$7,500 cash bond, according to South Padre Island officials.

Wright, 57, who is a practicing attorney at the Island, was charged with the third-degree felony offense of indecency with a child Thursday. Municipal Court Judge Paul Hemphill set Wright's bond following his arraignment Friday morning.

Police will forward the case to the Cameron County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

Wright was arrested Thursday morning after being accused of exposing himself on the beach — the second time within a year.

Woman says maintenance man raped her

BY SERGIO CHAPA

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

A 42-year-old woman told police on Monday that her apartment complex's maintenance man broke into her apartment and raped her on March 4.

The alleged sexual assault took place at the Las Palmas Apartments at 1800 Palm Blvd. between 10 and 10:30 p.m., according to a Brownsville police report.

The woman told police that the apartment maintenance man, who she only knows as "Tono," was trying to use his keys to let himself into her apartment.

The woman opened the door, but "Tono" allegedly entered the apartment forcefully and sexually assaulting her.

The maintenance man, according to the police report, told the woman intimate details about female neighbors leading her to believe he had also entered their apartments without permission.

The woman told police that she did not report the incident to family, friends, neighbors or authorities because she was ashamed and embarrassed by the assault.

Apartment owners could not be reached for comment, but Brownsville police said the case remains under investigation.

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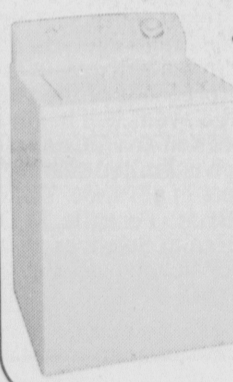
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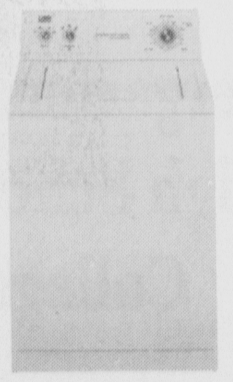
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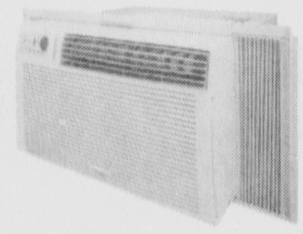


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