



State Attorney
18th Judicial Circuit
Brevard and Seminole Counties



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The Monthly Brief

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Man who used Publisher's Clearing House scam to fleece seniors faces more charges in Brevard

A previously convicted scammer is in jail in Brevard County for allegedly conning a Merritt Island woman out of thousands of dollars by posing as a Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes employee.

KASON R. DIXON, 30, of Kissimmee already was convicted in Hillsborough County in 2025 and sentenced to eight years in prison for multiple counts of theft and of exploitation of people older than 65. Dixon's sweepstakes scam in Hillsborough matched the one he is accused of carrying out in Brevard County – and offers a lesson for residents on what to watch out for.

Sheriff's investigators say Dixon called victims from his cell phone posing as a Publisher's Clearing House staffer and told them they had won \$4 million and a Mercedes car. But first, he told the victims, they would have to pay taxes and fees up front on the lottery winnings and car to get the prizes. To assist with that, the caller said, a Publisher's Clearing House representative would be there in minutes with tax forms to fill out. The man who rang their doorbells also was Dixon, usually carrying a bouquet of roses and wearing a "PCH" polo shirt.

On Merritt Island, Dixon came inside with forms for the 81-year-old woman to fill out, then left with \$6,250 in cash, detectives say.

In the Tampa area, Dixon persuaded one of his three victims to drive him to her banks where she withdrew and gave him \$43,100 in cash for the so-called taxes and fees.

Most frightening, Dixon would call victims more than 20 times over 2-3 days, asking for more money, sheriffs investigators said. When the victims wouldn't pay more, Dixon went to their homes, pulled a weapon and robbed them – or tried to. Curiously, he demanded Euros instead of dollars on at least two occasions.

In Brevard, Dixon has been charged with organized fraud, grand theft and home invasion. He was transferred from a state prison to Brevard County to await trial.



Kason R. Dixon

How to Protect Yourself

Beware advance calls or texts: Publisher's Clearing House says its Prize Patrol only notifies winners in person, not via phone, text or social media.

Never pay to win: Legitimate sweepstakes are free. Only scammers demand fees, taxes or shipping costs.

Verify directly: Call Publisher's Clearing House at 1-800-459-4724 to verify any suspicious contact.

Never share personal info: Do not give out banking details or social security numbers.

Is your video-streaming account really suspended?

If you receive an urgent email or text claiming your Netflix, Hulu or Prime Video subscription has been locked or suspended due to a billing issue, take a breath before you click on anything. The Better Business Bureau has reported a spike in phishing scams that mention the top streaming services and are designed to steal your credit card details and identity.

The setup

Scammers send highly realistic messages – often featuring official logos and branding – warning that your account will be deleted within 24 hours unless you update your payment information. These messages typically link to a "spoofed" website that looks identical to the real login page.

Once you enter your credentials and credit card number, the scammers harvest your data, often selling it on the dark web or making unauthorized purchases immediately.

How to protect yourself

Go to the source: Never click links in an email or text. If you're worried about your account status, open a new browser tab and manually type in netflix.com or hulu.com, or check the official app on your device.

Check the "from" address: Scammers use display names like "Netflix Support," but if you tap the sender's email address, it often reveals a string of random characters or a domain that isn't netflix.com.

Enable two-factor authentication (2FA): Most streaming platforms offer security features that require a code sent to your phone or email to log in. This adds a critical layer of protection even if a scammer manages to get your password.



Burglar facing life sentence after failed jewelry heist

LENELL BARNES III didn't get away with any gold or precious gems after he rammed a pickup truck through the entrance of a Lake Mary jewelry store. But he did cause about \$8,000 in damage to the business. And for that, a Seminole County jury convicted Barnes April 23 of burglary of a structure with more than \$1,000 in losses – a first-degree felony punishable by up to life in prison.

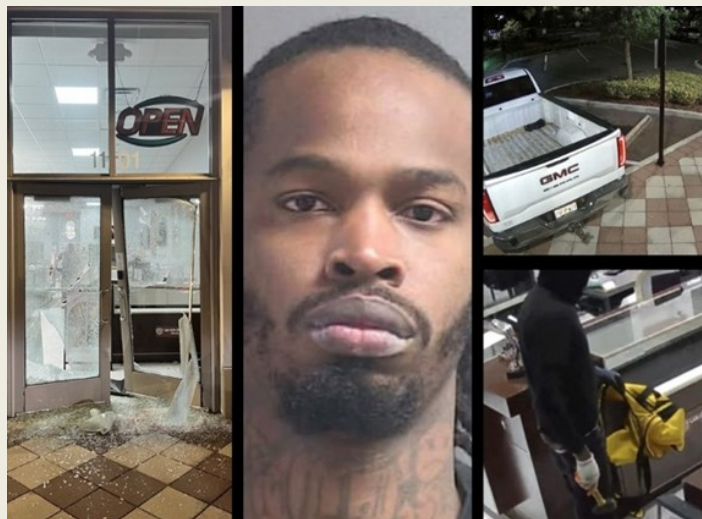
Prosecutors Joan Jean, Niko Smith and Domenick Leo presented jurors with store security video and testimony from police officers that proved Barnes, 29, was the ski-masked burglar who broke into Casa Leon Jewelers around 11:17 p.m. on April 27, 2024.

Carrying a hammer and yellow duffel bag, the burglar discovered the jewelry cases had been emptied by store staff and quickly fled in the truck.

Lake Mary Police arrived at the store within minutes in response to a store alarm triggered by broken glass. A store manager immediately provided security video showing the suspect arriving and leaving in the truck. Police alerted other agencies to be on the lookout for the truck.

Orlando Police later spotted the truck, and Barnes led them on a high-speed chase before getting out of the vehicle and running on foot. An Orlando officer testified that as they were pursuing Barnes, he tossed away several items including a yellow duffel bag, a hammer, and a glove the same color the burglar wore in store security video. Surveillance video of the chase from a sheriff's helicopter was instrumental in proving the case, Smith said.

Circuit Judge Melanie Chase scheduled sentencing for May 26.



'Habitual' drug dealer sentenced to 30 years

A Merritt Island drug dealer who supplied users with fentanyl and cocaine until a sheriff's SWAT team raided his mobile home was sentenced April 15 to 30 years in prison.

A Brevard County jury convicted JEREMY D. PRIEST, 51, in February of trafficking fentanyl and cocaine based on evidence presented by Assistant State Attorneys Rebecca Price and Bernadette Serafinowicz. The prosecutors also convinced the jury that Priest should be sentenced as a Habitual Felony Offender, a status that allowed the court to increase the maximum prison term.

"We thank the jury for their decision," Price said. "It allowed us to remove Mr. Priest and his dangerous drugs from the community and keep people safer."

Seminole prosecutors send murderer to prison for life

NATHANIEL S. BRATCHER didn't exactly hide what he did, which helped Seminole County prosecutors convict him of murder and send him to prison for life.

The night of September 18, 2024, Bratcher called his ex-girlfriend at a bar to tell her he was going to her Lake Mary area apartment to kill any man he found there. Moments later, when the woman called him back, Bratcher, 28, said he had just shot and killed her new boyfriend, Larreon Cosby, 32. Within an hour after that, police stopped Bratcher in traffic and spotted blood on his pants and his shoes, which later matched bloody footprints at the scene.

A jury convicted Bratcher in March of second-degree murder based on evidence and testimony presented by Assistant State Attorneys Stewart Stone and Anne Wedge-McMillen.

Circuit Judge Jessica Reeksiedler sentenced Bratcher on April 21 to life in state prison.

Palm Bay man indicted for killing, burying friend missing since 2025

A Palm Bay man has been indicted for the murder of a friend who was reported missing in 2025 and whose remains were discovered in February.

The Brevard County Grand Jury indicted GEORGE H. MANCILLA, 52, on April 28 for killing William S. Berry.

Palm Bay Police determined that Mancilla killed Berry, 63, by asphyxiation at Mancilla's home on SW Turk Road in March 2025 and buried Berry's body nearby. Then he and others fraudulently used Berry's debit card to withdraw or transfer cash.

When police executed a search warrant at Mancilla's home in February, he had Berry's debit card. During a police interview, Mancilla said he smothered Berry with a bed comforter. Mancilla then escorted officers to a wooded area of Palm Bay where a forensic team recovered the remains. DNA tests confirmed they were Berry's.

