



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Police charge man with trafficking four women in Elkridge *Ronald Willis Cheek, of Waldorf, also facing drug distribution charges*

Howard County police have charged a Waldorf man with drug distribution and human trafficking of four women at an Elkridge motel.

Ronald Willis Cheek, 49, of Albacore Court, has been charged with nine counts of human trafficking, five counts of prostitution and three counts of drug charges, including possession with intent to distribute. He is being held without bond at the Howard County Detention Center.

Police received a tip about suspicious activity at the Terrace Motel in the 6200 block of Washington Blvd., and responded to the location in the late evening of July 10. Upon arrival, officers located four women, ranging in age from 20 to 28, and Cheek at the motel. Cheek was taken into custody on an open Virginia arrest warrant for fraud. The officers recognized signs of possible human trafficking and after further investigation, detectives filed charges against Cheek on July 11.

Investigators believe that Cheek posted online prostitution ads with photos of the women, arranged appointments and collected the resulting payments. Detectives also believe Cheek was providing drugs to the women in order to keep them in his control. At the time of his arrest, police found a quantity of drugs indicative of distribution.

The victims, who were from Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland, were referred to appropriate services for assistance.

Howard County has an ongoing effort to combat prostitution, human trafficking and related offenses. Investigators are focused on arresting traffickers and offering assistance to victims through housing, treatment, transportation and other services.

Detectives regularly monitor websites for prostitution ads and place their own ads from the police department with warnings not to engage in prostitution or human trafficking in Howard County.

Investigators are asking anyone who may have information about suspected human trafficking or prostitution to contact police at 410-313-STOP or HCPDcrimetips@howardcountymd.gov.

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