

Couple's 'home grown' business in closets shut down by troopers

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Thursday, 17 December 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 17 December 2009 14:07

A Scottsburg area couple found themselves being escorted to jail on Friday evening, December 4, and their flourishing marijuana business shut down when Indiana State troopers visited their home on Sommerville Road.

Carl Collings, 34, and his wife, Melissa White-Collings, 40, were taken into custody by Indiana State Police after a search of their home north of Underwood revealed an indoor marijuana operation.

Troopers Mark LaMaster and Robbie Caudill arrived at the home around 7:30 p.m. in conjunction with a narcotics investigation the two were conducting. When the woman answered the door, Trp. LaMaster said he explained to her that someone had contacted the Sellersburg ISP post about possible drug activity at the home.

While the officers were talking to her, Trp. LaMaster said he detected the smell of "...raw marijuana coming from inside the residence." He asked permission to enter and to search the premises. Carl Collings agreed to let them in and told them that a third person was in the home, Amanda Mae Keeton, 26, Scottsburg.

After Carl Collings had seated himself in the kitchen, Keeton walked into the room as Trp. LaMaster was informing the Collingses that he detected the odor of marijuana. The officer said that Melissa Collings looked at her husband and asked, "Should we give it up?" Keeton told the officers that she had been staying with the Collingses "...and this is all I know about," as she pointed to a plastic cup filled with marijuana plants.

Carl Collings told the officers of the location of some of the marijuana, which was subsequently found in a room that had been fitted with a wooden bench and fluorescent light. Under the light were 12 small marijuana plants. In the room's closet were four mature marijuana plants. The closet had also been fitted with a light and a fan.

Following Carl Collings' directions, the officers also found a "grow" operation in the closet of the master bedroom. Three large plants were discovered there as well as a bag of raw marijuana weighing approximately 28 grams. Three dried plants were hanging from a rack, and a large pot was located containing marijuana seeds and leaves.

All of the plants, equipment and a set of scales was confiscated. Several firearms in the home were documented. None was found to be stolen.

The couple and their friend were taken to the Scott County Security Center in Scottsburg. The evidence was transported to the ISP post in Sellersburg.

Carl Collings has been charged with cultivating marijuana, maintaining a common nuisance and possession of marijuana, all Class D felonies, and possession of paraphernalia. Melissa White-Collins is charged with cultivating marijuana, maintaining a common nuisance and possession of marijuana, again all Class D felonies. Amanda Keeton was charged with visiting a common nuisance, a misdemeanor.

All of the charges were filed by the Scott County Prosecutor's Office in Scott Superior Court. The defendants appeared for initial court hearings on Monday, December 7, and not guilty pleas were entered for each.

The trial date for the three is March 2, 2010.

Keeton's bond was set at \$2,500 by corporate surety or 10% cash. Both of the Collingses' bonds were set originally at \$15,000 corporate surety/10% cash, but Senior Judge Robert Hublar, who presided during the hearings, allowed those bonds to be lowered to \$7,500/10% cash.

All three defendants have posted bond and were released to await their trials.