

BENTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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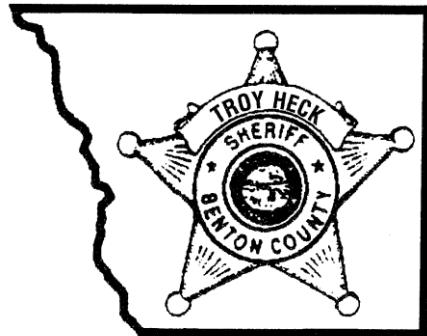
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Troy Heck, Sheriff
Neal Jacobson, Chief Deputy

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 01/07/2020

AUTHORITY OF SHERIFF TROY HECK

On January 6th, the Benton County Sheriff's Office arrested three individuals who were found burglarizing a storage facility.

At about 12:30 am on January 6th, 2020 the Benton County Sheriff's Office received a call from an individual reporting a burglary in progress at the JK Storage facility on Golden Spike Road NE in Sauk Rapids Township. The caller indicated that he was at JK Storage and had observed a white male fleeing on foot from the storage facility and another white male fleeing from the area in a white pickup truck. Benton County deputies and Sauk Rapids police officers converged on the area and found a white pickup truck driving without headlights on Osauka Rd NE at Mayhew Lake Rd NE. Deputies stopped this vehicle and made contact with the three males inside the vehicle. Investigating deputies noted that the front passenger and rear passenger in the vehicle appeared to be sweating and breathing heavily as though they had just engaged in physical activity. Deputies requested identification from these two individuals and the driver. The driver was identified as Tony Leonard Boyer, age 40 of Eden Valley, and the rear passenger identified himself as Thomas Allen Lovitt, age 36 of Blaine. The front passenger identified himself as Gregory Westerlund, however it was subsequently learned that this man was actually James Alan Westerlund, age 31 of St. Cloud. The witness to the burglary gave a clothing description of the suspect he saw fleeing the area on foot that matched the clothing worn by Westerlund. This witness was brought to the suspect's location and positively identified Westerlund as the person he had seen fleeing the storage facility. As investigating deputies spoke to Lovitt, it was noted that Lovitt's pants were wet and frozen and that he was missing his shoes. Lovitt described his shoes for deputies and claimed they were in the truck. A search of the truck indicated there were no such shoes present. Investigating deputies discovered that a storage unit at the facility had been forced open. Evidence found at the scene indicated that a number of items had been removed from this storage locker and moved to a location near the perimeter fence. Deputies also located shoe tracks in the snow leading from the area of the burglary to Osauka Rd NE. Deputies did locate a pair of shoes in the snow that appeared to match the shoes Lovitt stated he had been wearing. Investigating deputies also found burglary tools in Westerlund's possession and surveillance footage showing the suspects entering the burglarized storage locker. All three suspects were arrested on charges of burglary and criminal damage to property. Westerlund is also facing a charge of giving a false name to a police officer. All three are in the Benton County Jail awaiting their first court appearance.

The Benton County Sheriff's Office was assisted in this investigation by the Sauk Rapids Police Department.

Troy Heck
Benton County Sheriff