

Transient suspect of buying marijuana at Aspen shop for teen

By Jason Auslander

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Aspen police arrested a local homeless man Wednesday after he admitted to buying marijuana for a high school student, according to police.

Douglas McArthur Stewart Jr., 49, was charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, a felony, and ordered held Thursday in lieu of a \$5,000 bond.

"I did it," Stewart told a police officer who asked him if he'd purchased pot for a minor. "Yeah, they gave me money for 12 joints and let me keep two."

The incident began Monday, when a citizen turned in a gray, felt purse found underneath a picnic table at Rio Grande Park, according to an affidavit filed in Pitkin County District Court. An Aspen Police Department employee then located a Colorado driver's license inside belonging to a local 16-year-old.

The employee also noticed a strong odor of marijuana coming from inside the purse and referred the case to a detective because the owner of the purse was not old enough to possess marijuana, according to the affidavit.

The detective later met with the 16-year-old and her parents, who agreed to allow him to search the purse. Inside, he found a partially smoked joint in a tube identifying the dispensary that sold it and the time it was bought, the affidavit states.

"(The 16-year-old) remarked that high school kids commonly purchase marijuana from dispensaries using the local transient population," according to the affidavit. "(She) stated on this particular occasion, she had found a man wearing a black and white jacket and had obtained the marijuana from him."

The girl said she didn't know the man's name.

At the request of police, the manager of the dispensary that sold the joint later sent officers three images of the man who bought it. The man wore a black-and-white jacket with a white beanie, the affidavit states. Police asked dispensary employees to call if the man returned.

About 12 hours after receiving the pictures, a dispensary employee called police and said the man in the black-and-white jacket was back, though an officer dispatched to the dispensary later couldn't locate the man, according to the affidavit.

But less than an hour later, Stewart showed up at the entrance to the Police Department at the Pitkin County Courthouse and said he'd been kicked out of the nearby homeless shelter because he was too intoxicated and needed to be taken to detox or provided a Topsy Taxi to an unknown location, the affidavit states.

The officer immediately recognized Stewart as the man in the picture, partially because he was wearing the same jacket and hat, and arrested him after he admitted to buying the marijuana, according to the affidavit.

The 16-year-old was not charged with a crime, Detective Jeff Fain said.