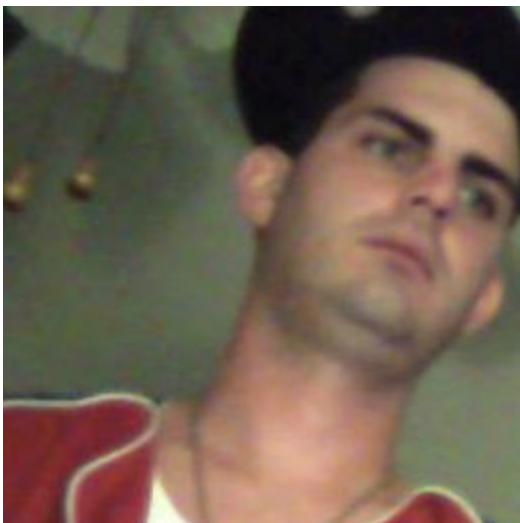


Three arrests made in Backpage robberies

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EAST ALTON - Three arrests have been made in robberies rooted in the oft nefarious sections of the website, **backpage.com**.

Detective Christian Cranmer of the **East Alton Police Department** said individuals seeking "female companionship" from a stranger found on that website went to a home in the **100 block of Victory Drive** in East Alton, where they were allegedly robbed at gunpoint. Residents of that home, **Antquello C. Young**, 25, and **Sierra Holman** were charged on Friday, Jan. 6 with several counts of armed robbery. Cranmer said more than a dozen people were possibly victimized by the couple, although only three of the alleged victims came to police. **Nicholas L. Gansz**, 32, of the **200 block of Michigan Ave.** in South Roxana was also charged with similar offenses from November 2016.

Cranmer said these cases were difficult to investigate due to the nature of the set-up.

"When someone goes into a house for 'female companionship,' they sometimes aren't honest about what they may be doing, which leaves law enforcement in the dust," Cranmer said.

From Nov. 18, 2016, through late December, Cranmer said his department investigated three separate incidents involving the same scenario. A break in the case came through the Hartford Police Department, who Cranmer said, received a viable report from a witness who was able to give police more details. That witness was able to give police enough information to secure a search warrant for the residence in the 100 block of Victory Drive.

A release from the **Hartford Police Department** from Dec. 31, 2016, said the **Hartford Police Department** was contacted at 4:30 a.m. on Dec. 22, 2016, by a male victim who told police he was robbed at gunpoint. He told police he was supposed to meet a woman from Backpage at a South Roxana residence. When the victim was lost, the release stated he pulled off the road on Route 111 and called the female regarding being lost. He was then approached by a female, a white male and a black male who robbed the victim of money and personal belongings. The suspects then reportedly fled in a vehicle.

The female was identified by police as Holman and the black male was identified as Young.

Following the Hartford Police search warrant execution, Cranmer said several personal documents, such as driver's licenses, credit cards and debit cards belonging to possible victims were discovered. Subsequent investigation linked several victims to the second residence in South Roxana. Other personal effects from alleged victims, including a handgun, were found.

South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles said a search warrant was executed at Gansz's residence, but no further evidence was discovered. He was arrested from his parents' home in Wood River on Jan. 6, 2017.

Young's armed robbery charge was enhanced due to a report he allegedly fired the gun at one alleged victim, Cranmer said.

Young was held on a \$250,000 bond. Gansz's bond was \$1 million. Coles said the higher bond was requested due to the severity and repeat nature of the crimes committed.