



Senior Detective Jason Clark, Fauquier County

Detective Clark graduated with a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Radford University in 1999. Following graduation, he began his law enforcement career with the Henderson, NC, Police Department in March 2020. He returned to Virginia in 2002 as a Narcotics/K-9 handler with the Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Office.

Detective Clark achieved many accomplishments and received many accolades during his tenure with the Spotsylvania Sheriff Office, including the Medal of Valor Award, the Weapon Seizure of the Year Award from the National Criminal Enforcement Association, the Meritorious Service Medal, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year 2006 from the Fredericksburg Elks Lodge #875 and the Criminal Investigations Division Employee of the Year 2007.

In January 2012, Detective Clark accepted a position with the Culpeper County Sheriff's Office as a Narcotics Detective K-9 handler. He continued his meritorious career by being named Deputy of the Year in 2012, being Sworn as a Taskforce Officer with DEA in 2013, appointed as a Team Leader for the Blue Ridge Narcotics and Gang Taskforce in 2015 and receiving the Certificate of Appreciation from the DEA in 2015.

In November of 2016, Detective Clark accepted a position as a Detective/K-9 handler with the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office. During his time assigned to our Special Operations Unit (SOU), Detective Clark utilized his passive K-9 to conduct narcotics-related searches of vehicles, buildings, and was instrumental in establishing inventive ways to utilize K-9's to conduct random searches of our jails and surrounding inmate workforce areas throughout our county.

Detective Clark was instrumental in the establishment of our Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) program. He worked with Senior Commanders to develop policies and procedures, which have served as models for many law enforcement agencies throughout the Commonwealth. Detective Clark was promoted to Senior Detective in October of 2019. Senior Detective Clark has investigated a wide range of crimes from narcotics cases to homicides. However, it is one of his most recent cases that sets Detective Clark apart from most investigators. He deserves to be honored for his impressive role in cracking "Operation Scary Spice."

"Operation Scary Spice" began eight years ago and remains an active Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case, making its way through the court system. The case began in Fauquier County, but Detective Clark quickly realized it traversed to many regions across our country. As lead investigator on this eye-opening case, his actions, investigative strategies, ingenuity, imagination, and those of our partners saved many lives and improved the quality of life in our community, as well as communities throughout the country.





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In 2012, the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office began receiving information regarding activities at a local gas station/convenience store. Purportedly, the store was selling K-2, Spice, and bath salts as "incense," as well as other aromatics to persons wishing to ingest these materials to get high. Because these substances were advertised as incense and other scents and marked as "not for human consumption," our burden was to prove the buyer intended to ingest them and that the seller knowingly sold them for the purpose of ingesting.

Our detectives made several attempts to dismantle/disrupt this operation, but to no avail. The FCSO met with negative results, primarily because the laws regarding scheduled substances were not keeping up with the chemists who were creating these dangerous substances. By the time our detectives received a certificate of analysis, the substances were no longer deemed illegal, hence, making prosecution impossible. Another significant factor was due to the fact that the substance were not the typical battery of examinations for controlled substances that the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (DFS) conducted.

As legislation changed, so did the chemists who concocted these substances. They continuously found new ways to modify the chemical compositions, skirting the law and all emergency actions taken by the government to combat them. Often, large investigative obstacles were created by the mere fact the possession or sale of the materials used in the substances were not illegal. Detectives needed concrete evidence to support the reasoning that knowingly possessing/distributing/selling these materials for the purpose of human ingestion/consumption was illegal. After many failed attempts to gain traction and information regarding this local convenience business slowed and detectives' focus shifted to other areas of concern.

In 2017, our region began experiencing an increase of drug overdoses, as well as bizarre incidents, which closely resembled PCP reactions of the past. Detective Clark began to research old calls for service in order to collect data. He made sure to include data from Warrenton Police Department, as well as the surrounding area. During this labor-intensive process, Detective Clark utilized community partners, who could help identify sources of information and who identified the store as a large distribution center for these substances plaguing our region.

Detective Clark's vast experience in the investigation of and his knowledge of narcotics and other drug related activities, made him determined that the distribution of these materials within our region had to be stopped. It was then that he embarked on a whole new approach in order to be successful and effective. He set out to identify several potential trademark and copyright infringements regarding the packaging used by the suppliers. The supplier used Warner Brothers and DC Comics registered symbols and names on their packaging. Detective Clark initiated contact with the legal departments for both well-known companies, which were not pleased with the trademark violations. In turn, these two notable companies provided signed affidavits supporting prosecution for the infringements.

At that point, the case took on a whole new life! Detective Clark's efforts were finally recognized by federal agencies and momentum began to build. It led to the initiation of a joint Fauquier County Sheriff's Office, Homeland Security Investigations, Special Agent in Charge District of Columbia, Drug Enforcement Agency Washington Field Office and the United States Postal Inspection Services investigation that developed into a major Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force case called "Operation Scary Spice" and approved Regional Priority Organization Target for HSI SAC DC.



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Detective Clark devoted hundreds of hours conducting undercover meets, surveillance, reporting, and investigative activities to further this investigation. He conducted undercover activities that led to the execution of state and federal search warrants, resulting in the arrest and plea of the convenience store owner, seizure of 8 kilograms of synthetic cannabinoids, and approximately \$420,000. Surveillance and subsequent interviews derived from Detective Clark's efforts led to the identification of a California-based criminal organization that was responsible for the manufacturing and nationwide distribution of schedule I synthetic cannabinoids. These individuals were identified as using shell companies and individuals to conduct sophisticated money laundering activities.

Since 2017, the California-based criminal organization has been identified as depositing more than \$3.3 million in illegal proceeds from the sale of synthetic cannabinoids. The monies were used for payments of high-end luxury vehicles and real property. Federal search warrants, executed in California at businesses associated with the main distributor, resulted in the dismantlement of a "mega super lab" that contained dangerous schedule I substances. Investigators seized 4,500 pounds of marijuana, which was to be turned into butane honey oil "BHO," 300 kilos of finished BHO product and 2 kilograms of a schedule I substance used in the manufacturing of synthetic cannabinoids. Additionally, six vehicles and \$52,066 in US currency was seized.

During the investigation, Detective Clark became instrumental in identifying victims from across the U.S., who overdosed on the same chemical substances distributed by the California-based manufacturer. Detective Clark took it upon himself to contact Medical Examiners Offices, Toxicology Laboratories, and local Police Departments throughout the United States to identify any individuals whose cause of death was the result of intoxication of ABD-FUBINACA - one of the primary schedule I components found in the synthetic cannabinoids produced by the California based supplier.

As a result Detective Clark was able to link the death of an individual in New Hampshire, who had consumed "Mad Hatter Blueberry" synthetic cannabinoids, to the California-based supplier. With the support of the local Seabrook, New Hampshire Police Department, Detective Clark was able to link the overdose death to a local New Hampshire retail distributor, who was identified as a primary customer of the California-based supplier. Federal search warrants for the New Hampshire-based retail supplier resulted in the seizure of more than 12 kilos of synthetic cannabinoids and \$679,000 U.S. currency.

The successful outcome of "Operation Scary Spice" is directly attributable to the unselfish, hard-working efforts of Detective Clark. He assisted in the preparation and execution of federal search and seizure warrants, case coordination activities with the U.S. Attorney's Office, witness preparation for grand jury testimony, undercover operations, surveillance activities, correspondence with nationwide officers, Medical Examiners and laboratory personnel, and the review, analysis, and production of investigative documents.

Detective Clark's ability to recognize, and utilize other violations of law, not typically used in relation to investigations of local drugs, in order to successfully disrupt a major criminal enterprise, is the type of activity worthy of such prestigious recognition by his peers. He is a remarkable person, an exceptional law enforcement officer and a highly valued member of my team.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to nominate such an incredible Detective, who has devoted so much time and effort to help combat this deadly epidemic.

Sheriff Robert P. Mosier, Fauquier County and
Captain Mike Zeets, Commander Criminal Investigations Division, Fauquier County