

WINTER HAVEN POLICE

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Date: Dec. 26, 2014

Time: 4 P.M.

Contact: Jamie Brown – Public Information Officer

WINTER HAVEN – A 45 year-old Winter Haven man had his Christmas Day photo taken at the Polk County Jail instead of with Santa Claus, courtesy of three witnesses who took him down after he attempted to rob a 68 year-old woman.

On 12-25-14 at approximately 5:45 p.m., 68 year-old Valerie Melzer of Winter Haven was returning to her vehicle after she and three friends finished eating supper at a restaurant located at 884 Cypress Gardens Blvd., SW in Winter Haven. As Melzer approached the passenger side door to get inside the vehicle, 45 year-old Larry S. Kent Jr., (DOB 8-30-69, LNA 114 Winter Ridge Dr., Winter Haven) ran up behind her grabbing her purse.

Melzer began screaming and wouldn't surrender the purse. When two of the victim's friends heard her scream, they sprang into action. At this time, Kent was dragging the victim at least 15 feet across the parking lot. The witnesses, 66 year-old Marvin Hotakainen and 73 year-old Paul Murray tackled Kent pinning him to the ground while Melzer was able to break free.

During this time, 67 year-old Patrick Cameron, who was also leaving the restaurant, heard the commotion and ran to help when the witnesses yelled that Kent had a gun. Cameron ran to assist holding Kent's legs while Hotakainen and Murray held his upper body to the ground and retrieved the gun. (The weapon turned out to be a BB gun.)

Ms. Melzer (victim) sustained minor cuts and scratches from the incident. She was treated and released at the scene. Kent was transported to the Winter Haven Hospital Emergency room after complaining of pains due to being restrained. He suffered a broken rib and other minor injuries. While at the hospital, officers found a clear baggie, which field tested positive for methamphetamine, next to the stretcher where Kent was being treated. The total weight of the methamphetamine was .9 grams.

Once treated for his injuries, Kent was transported to the Polk County Jail and booked in on charges of Robbery with a Firearm/Deadly Weapon (FL), Battery on Person 65 YOA or Older (F3), Possession of Methamphetamine (F3) and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, where he remains without bond.

Kent is no stranger to the law. He served 4 years in Florida State Prison for Grand Theft Auto, Forgery and Grand Theft. He has been arrested 17 times in Polk County on charges of Battery, Criminal Mischief and Burglary along with multiple counts of Forgery, Larceny and Grand Theft.



Larry S. Kent, Jr.