

MICHIGAN

Genesee Co. authorities accuse ex-cop of criminal sexual conduct

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A former police officer accused of criminal sexual conduct has been charged by the Genesee County Prosecutor's Office, officials said Thursday.

Jeffrey Morningstar, 60, was first arrested in July, Genesee County Sheriff Christopher Swanson said in a Facebook video.

He said County Prosecutor David Leyton recently authorized charges of child sexually abusive activity, using a computer to commit a crime, and accosting a child for immoral purposes against Morningstar.

Authorities sought an arrest warrant for Morningstar on Wednesday, according to court records. It was canceled earlier Thursday morning, they also said.

The attorney representing Morningstar and listed by court records was not immediately available for comment Thursday.

The Sheriff's Office said Thursday afternoon that Morningstar had surrendered to the 67th District Court and was granted a bond with the condition he cannot be around children under age 18.

Morningstar was hired by the DPD in 1997 and went through its academy but never worked road patrol, Swanson said. He transferred to Millington in Tuscola County and worked there for six years, the sheriff said.

The suspect later worked part-time for the Clio Police Department for about 18 months before moving to Florida and working as a police officer in Longboat Key for 12 years, according to Swanson. In 2014, he was promoted to sergeant there, he said.

"Rarely do I identify the employers of the individuals we arrest because it's not their fault," the sheriff said. "But we identify individuals that have this type of influence because they sometimes use it to target and dominate victims."

Swanson said Morningstar was arrested in a sting by members of his office's Genesee Human Oppression Strike Team, or GHOST, a special task force with the sheriff's office that targets sexual predators. The task force has been in operation since 2018.

Morningstar allegedly was in communication with an undercover officer posing as a human trafficker in Burton who offered to sell him sex with a 15-year-old girl.

Police said the former cop agreed to visit Burton for a sexual encounter with a teen on an agreed-upon date. They also said he offered to pay \$125 for sex with the minor and an extra \$25 for her to urinate on him.

"I know it may be difficult for some to hear that," Swanson said. "I don't do it to demean or humiliate. That's not my intention. It's to send a message that predators are among us and G.H.O.S.T will be there to find them."

He also urged anyone who may be a victim of Morningstar to call his office.

"He knocked on the door and GHOST answered," the sheriff said. "Has he done it to someone who wasn't with GHOST?"

Swanson also urged parents and authorities to remain on guard against sexual predators who target children.

"You need to have conservation with your loved ones," he said. "And people in authority you need to watch and make sure people aren't putting themselves in positions over others to use that trust to open up a door to vulnerable young people or adults."

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