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Store Owner Sentenced to Three Years in Prison for Synthetic Drug Sales, Tax Violations

(TIFFIN, Ohio) -- Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Seneca County Prosecutor Derek DeVine announced today that a Tiffin business owner was sentenced to three years in prison in connection with the sale of synthetic drugs and multiple violations of tax law.

Shawn Stagnolia, 37, pleaded guilty in March to charges of aggravated possession of drugs, permitting drug abuse, distribution of tobacco products with intent to avoid payment of tax, possession of untaxed tobacco products, and failure to file a withholding return. He was sentenced this afternoon by Judge Michael P. Kelbley to three years in prison.

Stagnolia was charged after authorities with the METRICH Drug Task Force, Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), and Ohio Department of Taxation served a search warrant at his business, Zig Stag, on Market Street in Tiffin last year. Investigators found evidence of the sale of synthetic drugs under names such as "Shpark in the Dark" and "Atomic." He also illegally sold tobacco products without tax.

"Synthetic drugs are poison, and this individual knew full well that what he was selling was a dangerous, illegal product," said Attorney General DeWine. "Today's sentencing proves that we will prosecute those who sell these unpredictable chemical compounds to Ohioans."

"This drug trafficking store operated under the guise of legality, and it is important for everyone to know that the drugs coming from that store and others like it are just as dangerous as illegal drugs purchased on the street," said Seneca County Prosecutor DeVine. "Seneca County appreciates the assistance from the Attorney General's Office, BCI, and other law enforcement agencies in gathering the evidence necessary to close this illegal operation for good in Tiffin."

The Attorney General's Special Prosecutions Section assisted with the prosecution of the criminal case.

Attorney General DeWine also filed a civil lawsuit, which is still pending, against Stagnolia under Ohio's Consumer Sales Practice Act and Ohio's Public Nuisance laws. The civil action alleges that Stagnolia engaged in unfair, deceptive, and unconscionable acts by selling synthetic drugs as legal products. The Attorney General's pursuit of a nuisance finding against the defendant would prevent him from opening or operating a similar business elsewhere in the state.

Other consumer protection lawsuits filed by the Ohio Attorney General's Office have resulted in multiple business owners being ordered to pay a combined total of \$45,000 in fines to be used for the prevention and investigation of synthetic drug use in the state, and other nuisance abatement actions have resulted in the temporary closure of several stores.