Warrant ordered for woman in explosives case

BY KATE BRUMBACK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — A warrant has been issued for a north Georgia woman who was arrested on new charges less than six months after a federal judge sentenced her to probation on federal explosives charges. Court records show a U.S. District Judge Richard Story signed an order for a warrant for Celia Savage and a probation revocation hearing will likely be scheduled. The order was signed Aug. 14 and was filed with the court clerk Wednesday.

A lawyer for Savage said in an email that he had no comment.

Savage, 25, of Cornelia, originally was arrested in May 2012 after federal agents raided her home and found two pipe bombs and multiple guns. She pleaded guilty in July 2013 to making and possessing pipe bombs after reaching a plea agreement with prosecutors.

Story in February sentenced her to six years on probation but warned her that if she got in trouble again he’d send her to prison.

On Aug. 9, Savage was arrested on charges that include possession of methamphetamine, driving under the influence, criminal trespass and possession of prescription drugs with intent to distribute. She has been held in the Hall County jail without bond since her arrest.

Savage went to a tattoo parlor in Flowery Branch and became hostile when she realized the owner of the business was one of the narcotics agents involved in her federal case, federal probation officers wrote in a request for a warrant submitted to Story. She left when asked but came back later intoxicated and demanded service. When she was denied service because she was intoxicated, she intentionally destroyed a glass table the officers wrote. She also drove her car drunk that night, and police officers found methamphetamine in her purse and found prescription pills marked for sale in her vehicle, the probation officers wrote.

At her original sentencing, federal prosecutors had asked for three years in prison followed by three years of supervised release, citing the seriousness of the charges, anti-government statements she had posted online and previous run-ins with law enforcement.

James Campbell owner of Campbell’s Customs in Hampton, had a book signing Aug. 9 at the Speakeasy Bookstore in Hampton. More than 100 people attended the event, and organizers sold 50 copies of Campbell’s book.

UGA scientist ‘harvests’ agriculture ideas globally

BY JOSHUA BARKEY
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS

Dr. Jonathan “Tim” Williams is on a lifelong mission to better the world’s understanding of agriculture. But closest to his heart is the advocacy of safer peanut farming.

Dr. Williams, a senior scientist at the University of Georgia, developed a passion for chemistry while growing up in Zimbabwe. Raised on a farm, Dr. Williams realized he could integrate his passion into the field of agriculture. An important resource to the culture around him was peanuts. As leader of a program based at the Griffin campus, Dr. Williams recognized the economic impact of developing a stable market for selling peanuts, and the program’s extensive research has made peanut farming more profitable worldwide.

“The key to developing a market for peanuts, or for anything is to make the product attractive to buyers,” Williams said.

In the Philippines, for example, Dr. Williams and his colleagues added vitamin A to the peanut butter in an effort to prevent blindness in children.

Studies also proved that Filipinos prefer sweeter and darker roast peanut butter than what we consume in the United States.

“Mostly you need to find out what the local people like and value, and then teach or start local businesses to produce that for the market,” Williams stated.

Also, to be more profitable, peanuts must be devoid of toxins. Dr. Williams has spent a great deal of time studying toxins that can contaminate peanuts and their lasting effects on the immune system. One such toxin is Aflatoxin, a fungus that was discovered in the 1960s.

Aflatoxin is a carcinogenic meaning “cancer causing.” Weakening the immune system, Aflatoxin makes the body more susceptible to other disease-causing organisms. Aflatoxin has almost been eliminated in peanuts grown in the United States because of proper farming techniques, coupled with machinery that discards the affected peanuts. Peanuts containing Aflatoxin often show discoloring. In underdeveloped countries, farmers are required to discard the affected peanuts by hand. Eliminating the bad peanuts, in conjunction with proper watering, Aflatoxin is greatly reduced.

Dr. Williams has recently worked in South America and Africa educating farmers about the dangers of toxins. One such toxin prevalent in these regions is Fumonisin, which is mostly found in corn. Like Aflatoxin, Fumonisin weakens the immune system when consumed. Corn, a staple in Africa, is the primary source of Fumonisin.

Insects carrying the fungus burrow into the corn stalk. Because of the prevalence of HIV, Dr. Williams believes there is a correlation between Fumonisin-contaminated corn and HIV transmission rates in sub-Saharan Africa. These people are most vulnerable to disease because they are unaware of the toxin.

Dr. Williams and his colleagues have a theory that eliminating Fumonisin would greatly reduce the number of people infected with HIV.

Dr. Williams’ work has extended to other countries as well.

“In Guyana, we had to persuade the government to use local peanuts and cassava to feed the kids in the Children’s School. This helped the local farmers and saved the government money because they didn’t have to get the food for the Children’s School outside the country,” Williams explained.

He has also worked in the U.S. advocating the health benefits of peanuts to the American public. Before 1996, peanut consumption in the U.S. was on the decline, and many believed that peanuts were unhealthy. By educating the American public about the many health benefits of peanuts, such as lowering the risk of heart disease and weight gain, the U.S. consumption rate has increased. Today peanut products are in about 75 percent of all American homes.

Not only has Dr. Williams been a pioneer in peanut farming, his techniques extend as far as Mars. One of his greatest accomplishments was the invention of a device that measures water in peanut pods. It is called a “Linear Thermal Soil Temperature Probe.” Weighing only half an ounce, this device was employed by NASA on a rover to detect water on Mars. While only one of his many inventions, this is one of his proudest.

“That was a very exciting thing, you know,” Williams said. “You start doing something down here, and you suddenly find that it is being applied out there, in the big, wide world, in all sorts of ways you never really imagined.”

Dr. Williams’ passion for agriculture and vast knowledge of chemistry has been utilized worldwide. Not only has he educated the American public, but it has also achieved global recognition for implementing techniques imperative for the safe production of peanuts. These vast accomplishments are no small “peanuts” in a pod.

Joshua Barkey, a student at Spalding High School, was this year’s first-place winner for the NASA Science Writing Challenge.