

Houston Chronicle

La Porte Undercover Officers Bust Illegal Gaming Operation

By Chronicle News Service
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There's one less illegal gambling operation in the area, thanks to the La Porte Police Department's Street Crimes Division.

On Oct. 15, the department successfully executed a search warrant that resulted in the successful confiscation of 48 gaming machines and a total of \$14,500 in cash from the Vegas Game Room, 1117 South Broadway.

Detectives also placed the manager on duty under arrest for the offense of Possession of a Gaming Device and were able to seize the establishment's gaming machines and gambling proceeds, according to a press release.

"Illegal gambling is both a plague for the community and a serious vice for those who take part," said Detective John Krueger.

"Many people don't realize that illegal gambling establishments can often be a mere front for drug distribution, prostitution, or worse.

"(It) promotes and proliferates addiction, plain and simple, and that affects us all."

The charge, filed against Sandra Sarhay Martinez-Medrano, 25, of Humble, carries a penalty of up to one year in jail with fine amounts ranging up to \$4,000.

Tips received by detectives that the establishment had been engaging in illegal gambling practices were acknowledged and researched by the department several days prior to the raid, Krueger said. Through a series of undercover visits to the business, coupled with various interview and investigative techniques, division investigators were able to raise a flag with the Harris County District Attorney's Special Crimes Division.

"Working primarily in a covert fashion, our street crimes detectives rarely get the credit they deserve," he said. "But events such as these are where they really shine."

After consultation with members of the District Attorney's Office, detectives later visited the 174th District Court and were granted a search warrant for the business.

"Our department takes illegal gambling very seriously and will continue to fight the battle," Krueger said.