



THE GREENWOOD Commonwealth



DECEMBER 13-14, 2025 — 129th YEAR

WEEKEND

GREENWOOD, MISS. \$1.50

Accused ex-GPD officer was let go by Ruleville PD

Sanford charged in alleged drug trafficking scheme

By GERARD EDIC
Staff Writer

A former Greenwood police officer whom federal authorities have accused of participating in a Delta-wide drug trafficking scheme was previously let go as an officer from the Ruleville Police Department after being accused of assaulting a prisoner.

Jamario Sanford was one of 20 people apprehended by the FBI on Oct. 30 during early morning arrest

raids throughout the Delta and Shelby County, Tennessee. Fourteen of these people were members of law enforcement agencies throughout the Delta or were employed by those agencies during the time of the alleged drug trafficking, federal authorities say.

This included Sanford, who was an officer with the Greenwood Police Department from October 2021 to May 2022.

Just a day before he was let go, on May 12, 2022, the Mississippi Board

on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training (BLEOST) held a certification review hearing for Sanford that ultimately led to the cancellation of his certificate, according to the board's minutes of that meeting.

Operating under the state Department of Public Safety, the BLEOST is responsible for certifying law enforcement officers throughout Mississippi as well as establishing training procedures and standards for them to follow.

The BLEOST had received an application from the Greenwood Police Department to certify Sanford, who was hired by Greenwood on Oct. 29, 2021. According to the board, newly hired officers must complete a BLEOST-approved basic training course within one year of their hire date.

Agencies that continue to employ uncertified officers can face sanctions by the BLEOST.

During Sanford's certification review hearing, the board was given information that Sanford was dismissed as a Ruleville police officer "for being out of control when he

opened a jail cell and slapped a prisoner twice," according to the board's meeting minutes.

The Ruleville Police Department had given the BLEOST a video which showed Sanford entering a jail cell and allegedly physically assaulting a person on a bed and again after that person stood up.

Specific details about that incident, including the date and location, are not provided in the board's meeting minutes, and the Ruleville Police Department could not be reached for comment.

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'On Christmas Night'



Alicia Dallas

Greenwood Chorale members sing during a rehearsal for their holiday concert at 7 p.m. Dec. 16 at First Presbyterian Church. From the left at the rear are Ted MacIntosh, Steve Edwards, Charles Freeman and Brandon Cash as well as Becky Palmer in the front.

Greenwood Chorale to perform Tuesday

The Greenwood Chorale soon will offer the community its special holiday concert, "On Christmas Night."

The concert will begin at 7 p.m. Tuesday at First Presbyterian Church. Greenwoodian Paul Brown is the chorale's director.

Thanks to community sponsors, the concert is free to all comers. Everyone is invited.

The group of community singers will



Buchanan-Garlotte

be joined for the performance by Dr. Shelley Buchanan-Garlotte, soloist, and a chamber ensemble of flute, oboe, harp, organ and percussion.

Buchanan-Garlotte, a mezzo-soprano, is a native of Hattiesburg and an assistant pro-

fessor of voice at Mississippi Valley State University.

She has appeared with the Baton Rouge Symphony, Starkville Symphony, Indiana University Opera Theatre, Louisiana State University Opera Theater, Baton Rouge Opera, University of Southern Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, Utah Festival Opera Co., St. Louis Opera Theatre, and Mississippi Opera in Jackson.

Greenwood native, robbed in DC, recalls scary day

Sunjay Chawla says he felt loss of 'sense of being'

By TAYLOR THOMPSON
Staff Writer

Just over a year ago, Sunjay Chawla was robbed at gunpoint in Washington, D.C.

The Greenwood native and Pillow Academy graduate remembers it as the most invasive experience that he's ever had.

"For once, I genuinely felt like I had no control over the situation," he said. "I just felt like my personal space, my privacy, just my sense of being was completely taken away in that moment."

Chawla, 25, had just returned to Washington after the Thanksgiving holiday, interning on the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

It was a bright, sunny December day in the nation's

capital at the time of the robbery. The streets were busy with families and young people going about their day.

Amidst the bustle, Chawla was walking to his apartment in the NoMa district, carrying a bag of groceries in one hand and his phone in the other.

"It was a route that I walked almost every single day while I was over there," he said. "I was very comfortable with it. You could see the top of the grocery store from my apartment."

He turned a street corner, nearing his apartment, while talking to his mother, Gauri, on the phone. He noticed new tenants were busy moving in.

A car quickly pulled up behind Chawla as he was around 50 feet from his apartment. When he turned around, he saw three young men staring directly at him from inside the car.

Before the car came to a stop, one of the men stepped

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Photo provided by Sunjay Chawla. Sunjay Chawla, a Greenwood native and Pillow Academy graduate, was robbed at gunpoint while interning in Washington, D.C., in December 2024.

Red Kettle Campaign 80% of the way to goal

Bell ringers needed

By TAYLOR THOMPSON
Staff Writer

The Salvation Army of Greenwood is looking to finish strong in this year's Red Kettle Campaign, having collected more than 80% of its goal amount.

Capt. Johnny Anthony said Friday that this year's campaign had raised \$75,000. The fundraiser will end on Christmas Eve.

"The campaign has been

going great," said Anthony, the corps officer of Greenwood's Salvation Army chapter. "We're just about at our goal, around \$15,000 short as of (Friday)."

Volunteers have been ringing bells next to red kettles to help raise funds for The Salvation Army's operations.

The donations will help the organization provide clothing, food vouchers, hotel vouchers for the homeless, utility and rental aid and other needs to people in 14 counties.

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Photo by Taylor Thompson, © 2025, Emmerich Newspapers, Inc. Greenwood Market Place shopper Martha Ingram, left, donates to The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign Friday afternoon, with volunteer bell ringer J.P. Walker standing alongside her.

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Saturday: Increasing clouds, with a high near 61. Page 4A

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Grandmothers pass down beloved family recipes and advice. Page 5B

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