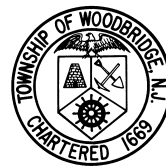


NEWS

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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WOODBIDGE P.D. CHARGES TOWNSHIP MAN WITH EASTER SUNDAY HIT & RUN ACCIDENT ON ROUTE 1

Police Credit Information Developed Via Public Response Following Accident in Aiding Ongoing Investigation

Woodbridge Twsp. – The Woodbridge Township Police Department (WPD) today announced the arrest of a Woodbridge Township resident on charges of endangering the welfare of an injured person following the Easter Sunday, near-fatal hit and run motor vehicle accident that occurred on Route 1 in Woodbridge. The endangering charge was filed by the Woodbridge Police Department Detective Bureau following an extensive and ongoing investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the March 23 hit and run accident.

According to Chief William Trenery, Woodbridge Township Police Department, Jesus Merchan, 32, 100 block of Clinton Street, Woodbridge Township, was arrested on April 8 and charged with third degree endangering the welfare of an injured person - additional criminal charges and motor vehicle violations are expected to be filed pending completion of the ongoing investigation. Merchan was taken into custody yesterday (Tues., April 8) at 4:30 p.m. at his Clinton Street residence by Woodbridge Police Department Detective Richard Hardish and uniformed police officers. Merchan was remanded to the Middlesex County Jail pending \$25,000 bail set by Municipal Court Judge Spencer B. Robbins. Arraignment in Middlesex County Superior Court remains pending and will be coordinated by the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office.

The Woodbridge Police Department reported that the hit and run accident occurred at approximately 3:18 a.m. on Sun., March 23, as the victim was walking across Route 1 near the Route 35 overpass in Woodbridge Township. The victim, identified as Caesar Arredondo, 29, Edison, Middlesex County, was located by passersby approximately two miles from the accident scene at 4:20 a.m. near Grove Street at Oak Avenue in Woodbridge. Arredondo was transported to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick suffering severe trauma to the body. Arredondo survived the hit and run accident after undergoing several surgeries and has subsequently been released from the hospital.

Working with few substantive leads regarding the hit and run accident, the Woodbridge Police Department issued a call to the public seeking information that would assist the ongoing investigation in identifying the driver of a red minivan reported at the initial scene of the accident in the early morning hours of March 23. Detectives ultimately received more than 20 information calls from the public, including an anonymous letter offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the driver of the hit and run vehicle – the anonymous person also provided information flyers to assist in the ongoing investigation. On Sat., March 29 and Sun., March 30, Woodbridge Police established a roadblock at the scene of the hit and run accident on Route 1, to distribute information flyers to motorists traveling Route 1 and Route 35.

As a result of information provided by the public, Det. Hardish and the Woodbridge Police Department Detective Bureau developed information that led to Merchan's arrest and the confiscation of a red, 1998 Ford Windstar minivan. The investigation remains ongoing and will be submitted to the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office for prosecution. Anyone with additional information is asked to contact the Woodbridge Police Department at 732-634-7700.

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