



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

Media Release

From: Michael Terry
Community Relations Specialist, 352-797-3608

Re: Traffic Stop Leads to Retail Theft Arrests

Date: December 22, 2016

On 12-19-16 at 10 p.m., Deputy Juan Perez was on proactive patrol in the area of Cortez Boulevard and Hunt Lane when he observed a silver Jeep Cherokee with an inoperable taillight.

Deputy Perez made contact with the driver, **Samuel Dean Whaley W/M DOB 9/4/1979**, who did not have a valid Florida driver's license.

During questioning of Whaley, Deputy Perez noticed a large number of miscellaneous items scattered about the rear of the vehicle.

Deputy Perez then made contact with the front seat passenger, **Michael Shawn Bissonette W/M DOB 6/11/1984**, and backseat passenger, Brandi Franklin, in reference to the items.

Bissonette told deputies he received the items from an unidentified friend due to him being out of work and down on his luck during Christmas.

Deputy Perez then spoke to Franklin who said Whaley and Bissonette stole the items from the Walmart on Cortez Boulevard.

Once confronted with the information from Franklin, Bissonette admitted to going to Walmart with Whaley and stealing various items. Bissonette said he stole the items because he is out of work.

Upon searching the vehicle, Deputy Perez found 23 items with a total value of \$1,128.63. A manager from Walmart responded to the scene and identified the items in question.

Whaley and Bissonette were each charged with one count of **Retail Theft**. Whaley was also charged with Driving with a **Suspended or Revoked License**. Bissonette's bond was set at \$2,000, while Whaley's bond was also set at \$2,000.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, and remains accountable to them.