



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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

Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Community/Media Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

Re: Detectives Make Arrest in Felony Criminal Mischief (Graffiti) Case

Date: May 3, 2017

On numerous occasions between 03-28-17 and 04-24-17, Hernando County Sheriff's deputies were summoned to various locations in Spring Hill regarding complaints of Criminal Mischief, more specifically, graffiti which had been painted on both county-owned and private property.

During this time period, deputies documented 18 cases of Criminal Mischief involving the same graffiti being painted on electrical boxes, traffic control boxes, utility boxes, USPS lockable mail boxes, street signs, dumpsters, vehicles, and doors and walls at local businesses. Some locations were targeted up to three times (after removing the graffiti one or two times previously).

In an effort to solve these crimes, School Resource Deputy John Fremer (Powell Middle School) began asking students if they knew anything about the graffiti. Several students provided Deputy Fremer with the same name, "Dakota." Some additional leads were developed by Fremer and then he turned the investigation over to District Two detectives.

Detectives William Cooper and Eric Dunn located Dakota Wedgren at his residence in the Spring Haven Apartments, where he was taken into custody. Inside the residence, detectives located a large piece of cardboard with the same graffiti initials on it that were used in the Criminal Mischief cases. It appeared the cardboard was used as a practice canvas.

Post Miranda, Wedgren admitted to committing the offenses and demonstrated the specific graffiti sign that was used, using a marker and a sheet of paper. Wedgren advised he committed the offenses to "blow off steam because he had been depressed lately." The specific graffiti sign was supposed to look like the letters ME (referring to himself) and NY (referring to New York) where he just moved from two months ago.

Dakota James Wedgren W/M DOB/12-16-1998 was charged as follows:

- Felony Criminal Mischief (8 counts)
- Misdemeanor Criminal Mischief (10 counts)
- Bond – \$24,000.

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.