



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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

**Re:** Autistic Child Found Wandering Spring Hill Neighborhood Returned Home Safely

**Date:** April 11, 2018

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On 4-10-18 at 10:06 a.m., Hernando County Sheriff's deputies responded to a Spring Hill neighborhood in reference to a juvenile running from house to house during a thunderstorm.

When deputies located the child, they attempted to speak to the young girl to determine where she lived.

The deputy noted the girl, who was about 7 years old, appeared unable to speak and was demonstrating signs of severe Autism.

Hernando County Fire Rescue responded to evaluate the child for any possible medical concerns.

Once the child was medically cleared, deputies and firefighters began to canvass the area in search of the child's parents.

About an hour into the incident, a homeowner in the area arrived on scene and was able to identify the girl and provide a home address.

Deputies responded to that address where they were able to locate the child's mother, who had been asleep.

The mother responded to the child's location and took her back home to clean her up.

The mother told deputies her daughter suffers from severe Autism, insomnia, is mute, nearly deaf and has sensory processing disorder.

She indicated her daughter has gotten out on one other occasion and that the family had taken precautions to prevent it from happening again.

The deputy noted the various safety measures being utilized by the family.

The mother indicated her daughter woke up around 8:45 a.m., but both of them went back to bed shortly thereafter, as the child had been up most of the night.

At about 9:30 a.m., the child's grandmother arrived to take another child to school.

The mother, who was asleep at the time, believed the door might have been left unsecured by the grandmother.

The grandmother stated she also believed she might have left the door unlocked when she left the residence earlier that morning.

The Department of Children and Families responded to conduct its own investigation.

Deputies noted during their investigation the child attempted numerous times to open the front door and leave the residence.

Investigators determined there were no signs of neglect, and the case was closed.

#### **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.**