



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: School Safety Update

Date: July 19, 2019

Sheriff Al Nienhuis is pleased to report that, once again, each regular public school in Hernando County will be staffed by a School Resource Deputy Sheriff (SRO).

In early May of 2019, there was a change in the School Safety law that made the Guardian Program a more viable option, especially for smaller schools.

Because of this change, representatives from two Hernando County Charter Schools, the Gulf Coast Academy and Gulf Coast Middle School, contacted the HCSO just over two months ago about using Guardians in lieu of SROs.

Unfortunately, Hernando County does not have dedicated law enforcement training facilities, certified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), to provide the month-long initial firearms and defensive tactics training necessary to certify Guardians. Because of this, we partnered with our colleagues at the Pasco Sheriff's Office to provide this training for these two charter schools.

We are pleased to report that the Guardians from both the Gulf Coast Academy and Gulf Coast Middle School have completed their training and will be in place on the first day of the new school year.

Nevin Siefert, Administrative Director of Gulf Coast Academy, said, "We are excited to work in close collaboration with the HCSO and look forward to a safe and successful 2019-2020 school year."

With this year's law changes, it not only makes the Guardian Program a more viable option for our smaller schools, but also could be used to provide back-up to our SROs in our larger public schools. Because of this, we expect an increased demand for the Guardian Program in Hernando County.

For many years, Hernando County has been one of the only counties in the Tampa Bay area without a FDLE certified firearms range and defensive tactics facility. Sheriff Al Nienhuis is committed to working diligently to find the funding necessary to bring those same capabilities to Hernando County, not just for Guardians, but to enhance the training of the deputies who protect Hernando County citizens.

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, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.