



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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

### Media Release

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

**Re:** Commercial Burglary Committed in Spring Hill by 8-Year-Old and 9-Year-Old

**Date:** September 24, 2019

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On 09-23-19 just after 7 a.m., school personnel at J.D. Floyd Elementary School, located at 3139 Dumont Avenue in Spring Hill, discovered several classrooms to have been burglarized over the weekend.

Patrol deputies received the initial call prior to the School Resource Officer arriving on campus at his normal, designated time.

Investigation revealed that during the afternoon hours on 09-21-19, two students at the school, one who is 9 years old/4<sup>th</sup> grade, and one who is 8 years old/3<sup>rd</sup> grade, made entry onto the J.D. Floyd campus through the front gate. The suspects then entered into four classrooms that were either unlocked or not completely secured. Once inside the classrooms, the suspects committed numerous acts of vandalism including flipping tables, writing vulgarities on whiteboards, damaging school computers and technology, and damaging teacher's personal equipment and property.

One area of the school that was accessed by the suspects is utilized by the PACE Center for Girls. PACE is a separate function on the property of J.D. Floyd. In this case, the suspects accessed a portable classroom. Once inside, the suspects discharged a fire extinguisher.

Video surveillance and unique writing on the whiteboard aided in developing suspect leads.

The School Resource Officer, Deputy Ben Witherell, began conducting interviews. Post Miranda Warning, with at least one parent and a school administrator present, each one of the suspects confessed to the crimes.

Currently, each of the students have been issued school discipline, pending a review by the Hernando County School Board (HCSB), for possible expulsion. Additionally, the HCSB will

make a determination in regards to seeking criminal prosecution, due to the ages of the suspects.

If criminal prosecution is sought, the case will be forwarded to the State Attorney for review.

**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.**