



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Denise M. Moloney  
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**Re:** Man Sentenced to 30 Years in Prison in 2018 Sex Crimes Case

**Date:** March 6, 2020

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In December 2018, Hernando County deputies responded to a residence in Brooksville regarding a possible Sex Offense.

Upon arrival, deputies met with the two juvenile victims (both females between the ages of 10 and 15 years of age) and the parents of both victims.

Preliminary investigation revealed the juveniles had both been communicating with the suspect via Snapchat. Unbeknownst to the juveniles, the suspect was utilizing one or more “fake” accounts he had created in order to communicate with underage children. While communicating with the juveniles, the suspect sent photos of his penis to them.

The suspect arranged a meeting with the juveniles. When the suspect arrived, he invited both juveniles into his vehicle. The suspect and the juveniles smoked marijuana (provided by the suspect) together. The suspect then had sexual intercourse with one of the juveniles, while the other juvenile was present.

Detectives were called in to investigate.

Forensic Specialists located and collected physical evidence at the scene where the incident occurred. Said evidence was sent to the lab for testing. Detectives retrieved surveillance video from the area as well.

After an extensive investigation, and with assistance from the Crime Analysis Unit and various hi-tech and low-tech investigative techniques, the suspect was identified as Christopher William Felton of St. Petersburg, Florida.

On 01-04-19, an arrest warrant was issued for Felton for various felony sex offenses. The St. Petersburg Police Department was contacted in order to assist with locating and arresting Felton.

On 01-08-19, Felton was arrested by the St. Petersburg Police Department and transported to the Pinellas County Jail. Felton's vehicle was impounded at the same time, as it possibly contained additional evidence.

On 01-08-19, Hernando County Sheriff's detectives responded to the Pinellas County Jail to interview Felton regarding the allegations. During the interview, Felton made several admissions as to the events that transpired the day he met the juveniles, including having sexual intercourse with one of the juveniles in the presence of the other.

Detectives obtained search warrants for Felton's vehicle, cell phone, and social media accounts. A search of these items provided overwhelming evidence as to Felton's guilt in the investigation.

The case was then turned over to the State Attorney's Office for prosecution.

On 01-14-20, Felton elected to participate in a trial in front of the Honorable Judge Daniel Merritt Jr. The trial lasted three days. The jury returned, after three hours, with a verdict of GUILTY on the following charges:

- Lewd and Lascivious Battery
- Lewd and Lascivious Exhibition in Presence of a Child
- Traveling to Meet a Minor
- Transmission of Material Harmful to a Minor
- Contribute to the Delinquency of a Minor.

**Christopher Felton DOB/07-07-1994** was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment within the Florida Department of Corrections and will be on Sex Offender Probation for 10 years, following his release from prison.

***Detectives would like to remind parents of the importance of consistently monitoring their children's phones, social media accounts, and daily activities while reminding children of the dangers associated with strangers online.***

#### **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.**