



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Stabbing Leads to Homicide Arrest on Peyton Place

Date: August 20, 2020

On 08-19-20 at approximately 5:22 p.m., Hernando County Sheriff's deputies and Hernando County Fire and Emergency Services (HCFES) were dispatched to the 19000 block of Peyton Place in Brooksville regarding a Stabbing.

The caller, a mail carrier, reported turning on to Peyton Place and seeing three children looking at a man who was lying in the grass. The mail carrier then heard screaming and a male voice say, "Help, I'm dying."

The mail carrier approached the (male) victim and observed him to be bleeding profusely. The mail carrier called 9-1-1 and provided all the necessary information.

Upon arrival, deputies began searching for the suspect, who was described as a white male wearing blue jean shorts and no shirt. A possible suspect was observed by witnesses walking away from the scene at a fast pace.

Patrol deputies and K-9 teams flooded the area in an attempt to locate the suspect.

Corporal Steve Miller deployed his partner, K-9 Justice. Shortly after being deployed, K-9 Justice located the suspect hiding behind a residence on Sawdust Lane.

The suspect, identified as **James Dean Croft DOB/04-12-1972**, was placed into custody and transported to the Hernando County Sheriff's Office for interview. Croft refused to provide a statement to detectives.

A weapon was recovered on scene.

The victim, identity withheld as per Marsy's Law, was treated on scene by HCFES before being flown to a local trauma center. The victim succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

Croft was charged with 3rd Degree Murder. He remains in the Hernando County Detention Center.

The case is still active. No additional information can be released at this time.

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 was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.