



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Michael Terry  
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**Re:** Spring Hill Man Narrowly Avoids Becoming a Victim of Fraud

**Date:** April 21, 2021

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An old scam featuring a new twist recently made its way through Hernando County.

Last week, Hernando County detectives responded to investigate an organized fraud incident in Spring Hill.

An unknown man, who identified himself as a “lawyer,” contacted the victim, who is elderly.

The victim said the lawyer and a woman advised him over the phone that his granddaughter was involved in an accident on Cortez Boulevard in Spring Hill.

The victim was told he needed to pay \$15,000 in cash to keep his granddaughter out of jail.

The victim was instructed to put the cash in an envelope and write a case number on it that the caller provided.

The victim was then advised a female would come to his home to retrieve the envelope.

When the woman arrived, the victim handed over the envelope. The victim quickly began to have second thoughts about the transaction.

The victim was able to intercept the woman prior to leaving his property and retake possession of the envelope.

The woman proceeded to get into a vehicle and leave the area.

A short time later, another vehicle arrived at the victim’s address while the victim was on the phone with law enforcement. The victim and his family members confronted the driver. Deputies arrived as the driver was attempting to leave the residence.

The driver was identified as an employee for a national rideshare company. The driver indicated he was hired to transport an envelope from an address in Pasco County to the victim's address in Spring Hill.

The driver turned over the envelope to law enforcement. The envelope contained \$9,000 in cash. The rideshare driver is not believed to be involved in the scam.

With the help of the Pasco Sheriff's Office, detectives were able to locate a second victim in Pasco County who had given \$9,000 to the rideshare driver to keep a family member out of jail. The Pasco County victim advised she had received a similar call to the one the victim in Spring Hill received.

Due to the quick thinking of the Spring Hill victim, neither he nor the victim from Pasco County lost money in the scam.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office and the Pasco Sheriff's Office are continuing to investigate the incident in hopes of identifying the "lawyer," as well as the woman who came to the Spring Hill victim's home.

"There are two traits that many of these scams have in common," said Sheriff Al Nienhuis. "First, and biggest flag, is that scammers will demand money immediately to avoid some terrible problem. The problem is almost always a surprise to the victim. Second, the payment is always required to be done in a very specific manner like cash or a specific pre-paid card. When receiving calls like this, always get the caller's information and contact the organization via the published number. Potential victims can also contact law enforcement. "

The Sheriff added, "Legitimate organizations will always allow you time to verify the information and will give different and convenient options for resolving legitimate debts through well-established channels."

#### **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.**