



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Denise M. Moloney  
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**Re:** Handful of Individuals Take Advantage of Operation Safe Surrender

**Date:** May 25, 2021

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On Friday 05-21-21, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., **Operation Safe Surrender** was underway in a small “courtroom” inside the Spring Hill location of the Hernando County Clerk of Court and Comptroller’s office.

U.S. Marshal Pete Elliott introduced **Operation Safe Surrender** in Cleveland Ohio, in 2005, after losing a fellow officer several years prior. Elliott designed the program in hopes that fewer law enforcement officers would be hurt or killed in the line of duty.

Since the inception of the program, more than 35,000 individuals have surrendered voluntarily throughout the United States.

**Operation Safe Surrender** allows individuals with non-violent, misdemeanor warrants a chance to have their warrant reviewed, and potentially resolved, instead of being placed under arrest. Operation Safe Surrender is not an amnesty program, but does offer favorable consideration from the Court.

To ensure the operation on 05-21-21 was a success, representatives from the Hernando County Sheriff’s Office (Warrants Detectives, Bailiffs, and Warrants Clerks), Clerk’s Office, State Attorney’s Office, Public Defenders Office and Judges Christie Healis and Kurt Hitzemann were all present.

Bailiffs were on hand to conduct a safety check on each participant prior to the participant being led into the small courtroom. Once inside the courtroom, the participant was able to discuss their charges with one of the judges, the SAO representative and the Public Defender representative.

With the exception of one individual, who had a warrant from another county (we are only able to address Hernando County warrants), all participants were able to either settle their charges or were given court dates - to avoid arrest.

Below are the eight cases (participant's name removed) reviewed/resolved on 05-21-21:

- **Warrant – Trespass**
  - Jail – One Day/Credited Time Served
  - \$550 Fine/Payment Plan
- **Warrant – DUI/1<sup>st</sup> Offense and Open Container**
  - Court Date
- **Warrant – DWLSR and No Registration**
  - Probation
- **Warrant – No Valid D/L**
  - Probation
- **Warrant – No Valid DL and Unlawful Speed**
  - Fine - \$455 (No Valid D/L)
  - Fine - \$23 (Unlawful Speed)
- **Warrant – False Official Statement**
  - Fine - \$550
- **Warrant – DWLSR/2<sup>nd</sup> Offense**
  - Court Date
- **The last person arrived late.** They were instructed (by Judge Healis) to meet with Judge Healis in her (normal) courtroom. We do not yet know the disposition on this case.

Our hope is that more individuals will see the results of **Operation Safe Surrender** and take advantage of the next opportunity, and perhaps avoid a physical arrest at a time and/or place that is inconvenient.

### ***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.***