



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Michael Terry
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Re: Hernando County Couple Arrested for Retail Theft Spree Involving Fireworks

Date: July 14, 2021

Over the course of a week, numerous incidents of stolen fireworks were reported throughout Hernando County.

The retail theft incidents and one structure burglary occurred between 06-27-2021 and 07-03-2021.

Detectives with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office worked quickly to identify the two suspects later identified as **Joseph Blahous DOB/09-23-1994** and **Nicole Cawthron DOB/06-14-1991**.

The initial incident occurred on 06-27-2021 at Rural King, located at 2468 Commercial Way, in Spring Hill.

A couple later identified as Blahous and Cawthron were observed stealing a drill from the store.

On 06-28-2021, suspects matching Blahous and Cawthron's descriptions were observed stealing fireworks from Patriotic Fireworks located at 13251 Cortez Boulevard.

On 07-03-2021, employees observed the couple stealing fireworks from TNT Fireworks located at 13100 Cortez Boulevard.

On 07-03-2021, a report was received that two individuals later identified as Blahous and Cawthron had forced entry into a TNT Fireworks tent located at 1485 Commercial Way. The couple stole more than \$1,000 worth of fireworks from the business.

On 07-03-2021, the couple then went to a Patriotic Fireworks tent located at 3085 Commercial Way where they stole about \$600 worth of fireworks.

On 07-04-2021, deputies located Blahous and Cawthron sleeping in a vehicle parked at 2384 Commercial Way.

Deputies observed a large quantity of unused/new fireworks inside the vehicle.

The suspects were detained at the scene.

Following questioning, Blahous and Cawthron were arrested on four counts of **Felony Retail Theft** and one count of **Burglary**.

Cawthron was also charged with Possession of **Methamphetamine** and **Violation of Probation**.

Both suspects were charged with an additional count of **Retail Theft** in connection with a 06-10-2021 incident where the couple stolen more than \$1,200 in jewelry from a Walmart.

Additionally, Blahous was charged with **Dealing on Stolen Property** and **Defrauding a Pawnbroker** for selling the stolen jewelry.

Blahous and Cawthron were transported to the Hernando County Detention Center.

Blahous' bond was set at \$24,000, while Cawthron is being held on a no bond status due to her **Violation of Probation** charge.

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.