



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: School Resource Deputy Saves Choking Student at Eastside Elementary School

Date: September 17, 2019

On 09-17-19, as students were finishing breakfast in the cafeteria at Eastside Elementary School, School Resource Deputy Christopher Downey observed a pre-kindergarten teacher running toward him, with a student in her arms.

As the teacher approached Deputy Downey, she advised him that the student was choking and needed assistance.

Deputy Downey sprang into action.

Deputy Downey observed the student (4 year old) for a few seconds to determine if in fact there was an actual emergency. Immediately, Deputy Downey observed that the student was attempting to clear something from his throat.

The student did not appear to be breathing and was not making any sounds.

In an effort to dislodge the obstruction, Deputy Downey quickly administered five back blows to the student. This procedure proved unsuccessful; the student's airway was still obstructed.

Deputy Downey then administered five abdominal thrusts to the student. At this point Deputy Downey could hear the student making a high pitched sound. The student was then able to clear a large piece of cake (or bread) from his mouth.

The student, who is non-verbal, responded to Deputy Downey and school staff by making loud noises, indicating his airway was clear.

The student was then taken to the school clinic to be checked by the school nurse. The nurse advised the student appeared fine and proceeded to contact the student's parent(s) to advise them of the incident.

The student returned to class after the incident.

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.