



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Denise M. Moloney  
Public Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

**Re:** Sheriff Urges Residents to Lock Vehicles and Remove Valuables

**Date:** September 20, 2022

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On 09-19-2022 just before 2:30 a.m., a citizen driving on Aldoro Avenue in Spring Hill observed three or four black males dressed in hoodies, walking near the intersection of Aldoro Avenue and Montego Street.

The driver passed the males, then turned the vehicle around in an effort get a better look at the individuals and/or to see where they were going. When the driver turned around, the males fled on foot, headed westbound on Montego Street. The driver lost sight of them and contacted law enforcement.

Upon arrival in the area, deputies met with the driver. The driver advised, as the males were running away, they kept their faces covered and their hands "near their waistbands" as if attempting to hold or conceal an item, possibly a firearm.

Numerous deputies and a K-9 team converged on the area and attempted to locate the males. Deputy Jared Arnold and his partner, K-9 Odin, conducted an extensive track in the area. The track ended abruptly at Coronado Drive and Whitewood Avenue. It is believed the males got into a vehicle and fled the area.

Subsequent investigation revealed ten Vehicle Burglaries and three Stolen Vehicles.

All vehicles were UNLOCKED; one vehicle that was burglarized had a firearm inside.

These individuals, who were actively committing felony offenses, were now armed with at least one firearm, posing an added threat to citizens and law enforcement officers alike.

Many jurisdictions in the Tampa Bay area are experiencing crimes just like this. Several juveniles and/or young adults travel, most times in a stolen vehicle, to communities where the homes are somewhat close together, so they can be dropped off and scout for unlocked vehicles. They steal whatever is easily accessible and easy to carry, even loose change. If the keys are in the vehicle, there is a very high likelihood they will steal that as well.

Two of the three stolen vehicles were recovered in Hernando County, during daylight hours. The third stolen vehicle was recovered in St. Petersburg (Pinellas County).

In the past, citizens have provided video surveillance showing a vehicle driving slowly on a residential street. The driver stops, several people jump out, and each go in a different direction to attempt to gain access to unlocked vehicles. It is quite obvious when a vehicle is LOCKED, as the individual quickly moves on to the next. Once all vehicles in a small area have been "checked," they all return to the vehicle they arrived in and travel to another street.

In order to reduce your chances of being victimized by criminals committing these acts, **PLEASE REMOVE ALL VALUABLES FROM YOUR VEHICLE, ESPECIALLY FIREARMS, AND LOCK THE VEHICLE. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE KEYS IN VEHICLES.** *If need be, set a reminder on your phone/device to prompt you to lock the vehicle(s) once you are in for the night.*

District detectives are following up on all leads. Many residents in the area have already been contacted regarding the availability of video surveillance. If you live within a few blocks of this area and have cameras, please check your footage for 09-19-2022 between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. If there is anything that will possibly be of value to detectives, please call our office at 352-754-6830 so someone can retrieve it.

If you would like to participate in our "Eyes on the Street" program, please visit the following link - <https://www.hernandosheriff.org/Applications/CameraRegistration/> . *Eyes on the Street is designed to utilize the assistance of citizens/businesses in Hernando County in the fight against criminal activity. Completion of the registration enables detectives to contact you for possible investigative leads if criminal activity occurs in your area.*

If you have any information on this case, please contact our office.

### **Hernando County Crime Stoppers / Anonymous Tips**

***If you have information on this case, please contact Hernando County Crime Stoppers. You will remain anonymous!***

***Hernando County Crime Stoppers can be reached by phone at 1-866-990-TIPS (8477) or \*\*TIPS from a cell phone.***

***You may also submit your tip via the internet at <http://www.hernandocountycrimestoppers.com> .***

***You will remain anonymous and also be eligible for a reward up to \$5,000 cash!***

## *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.*