



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Paul Blackman

400 S. Eucalyptus St., Sebring FL 33870
863-402-7200 | www.highlandssheriff.org



Scott Dressel, Public Information Officer
863-991-0851 | rdressel@highlandssheriff.org

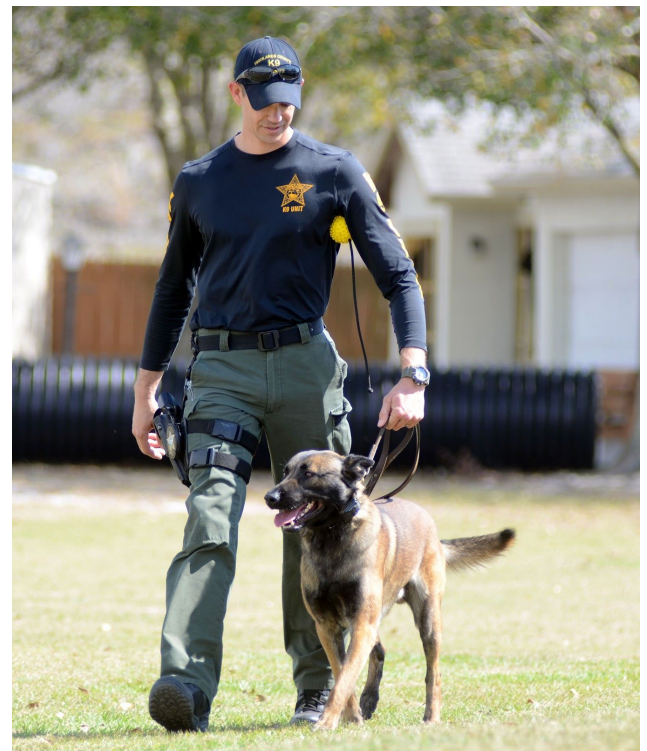
PRESS RELEASE: Feb. 20, 2017

Teamwork leads to arrest of burglary suspects

SEBRING -- The Highlands County Sheriff's Office's Charlie Squad used a combined effort in the pre-dawn hours Sunday morning (Feb. 19) to track down and arrest two teenagers suspected of being involved in an attempted burglary.

Several burglaries had been reported in the Sebring Country Estates area off Thunderbird Road, and at 4:11 a.m. Sunday, a resident on Corvette Avenue interrupted an attempt to steal a pair of Huffy three-wheeled bicycles off his porch. The suspect fled on foot.

While Deputy Coleman O'Gara was taking the report, Deputies William Gentry and John Garrison were canvassing the neighborhood and saw two males wearing dark clothing running through backyards at the intersection of Whatley Boulevard and Whatley Court. Several units, including Lt. Tyrone Tyson, Sgt. Mitchel Moore, Det. Amanda Dettman, Deputy Christopher Cloud, Deputy Daniel McFee, Deputy Ruben Carranza, Deputy Robert Gunthorp, converged on the area and set up a perimeter while Deputy Chris Bates and his K-9 partner Kylo Ren, a Belgian Malinois patrol dog, started a track.



Chris Bates and Kylo Ren

O'Gara saw the two run across Thunderbird Road and onto Comet Terrace. After a foot pursuit, the two suspect split up and the perimeter was re-established in the new area.

Bates and Kylo went to the area where the suspects were last seen and started a new track. Kylo tracked behind several houses and, with the help of Bates, scaled a 6-foot wooden privacy fence. On the other side of the fence, Bates said Kylo began showing what are known as "proximity alerts," meaning the suspects were nearby. Kylo found

the two suspects in a heavily wooded area about 20 yards away. Both surrendered when Bates threatened to send Kylo in after them.

When arrested, both suspects were found to be armed. Mitchell Ray Rizzo, 16, who was charged with burglary and attempted grand theft, had a black flashlight that could be used as a Taser, while his 17-year-old companion was charged with having a pair of metallic knuckles and loitering/prowling, both misdemeanors.

"I wanted to acknowledge the awesome teamwork that this squad showed last night," Bates wrote in an email to his supervisors and squad Sunday. "I cannot stress enough that these suspects were able to be located due to the perimeter units and the coordination of the perimeters by the supervisors, and the Deputies on scene. Any K-9 handler will tell you that, 99 percent of the time, suspects that flee are caught by perimeters. You all, as a team, were able to make these two sit down not once, but twice, by properly positioning the perimeters and staying alert while on perimeter. We were able to locate them only because the perimeter was able to contain them, and I am sure that without the assistance of everyone involved, these suspects would have been very difficult to locate."

"I have already received word from several residents in that area that they were as excited, or more, that we were able to catch them, and take them off the streets. Again, you all as the perimeter are the factors that were able to catch these suspects, and make this a successful incident where we were immediately able to make that community safer, and hopefully solve some other thefts/burglaries in the area."

"This was a great team performance by patrol and K9," Lt. Tyson wrote in response. "I must give a special recognition to D/S Garrison and D/S Gentry for their vigilance and relentless pursuit of the suspects after the initial contact. D/S O'Gara's attentiveness to detail while on perimeter not only made this apprehension possible, but expeditious.

"I can't fail to mention D/S Bates and D/S McFee's persistent pursuit of the suspects from the burglary earlier during the night. The unspoken hero is Kylo ... he performed the best track, I've ever witnessed by a patrol dog."

Major Mike Brown said he plans to recommend the involved deputies be considered for an exceptional achievement badge. "I couldn't be more proud of the work done by this group of deputies," he said. "It exemplifies the teamwork and effort which we want as the standard at the HCSO."