



CHRIS NOCCO, SHERIFF
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

TEAMWORK ♦ PROFESSIONALISM ♦ SERVICE

July 31, 2020

Dear Kathleen and Neil,

Regarding your memo to Sheriff Nocco dated July 28, 2020, the Pasco Sheriff's Office's response to your correspondence is below. However, the Pasco Sheriff's Office would first like to note and make clear that it is never our intent with the Prolific Offender Program or our Intelligence Led Policing (ILP) philosophy to publicly disparage any person. This program provides needed resources to individuals as part of information physically handed to them during prolific offender checks (a copy of that document is attached at the conclusion of this memo for review) and serves to protect our community through the reduction of crime and recidivism.

The comments we offer on individuals below is not something we desire to do as part of this program and is ONLY offered after this specific request from the Tampa Bay Times. Please note that we do not offer comment on ANY other individuals besides those that the Tampa Bay Times specifically asked about and those with whom they are associated in a desire to provide full information.

We first want to note, recognizing the importance of factual accuracy in this information, that references to "first contacts" in regards to the subjects below refer to the first contact where the person was an offender, a missing person, on curfew or other, assorted contacts. The subject may have had previous contacts with the Pasco Sheriff's Office where they were victims or witnesses but, for the purposes of this response, those are not considered.

To begin, we first address the Times' reporting regarding Matthew Lott. As part of the request, the Times states that the Pasco Sheriff's Office conducted two dozen (24) prolific offender checks on Matthew Lott in the first half of 2017. We can confirm this number, however, it is important to note that our first contact with Mr. Lott was on February 8, 2016 when he was reported as a Missing Person/Runaway to our agency after he had skipped school that day. In addition, Mr. Lott was also given a curfew warning on March 13, 2016.

Shortly after that curfew warning, on July 25, 2016, Mr. Lott was arrested for the burglary of a residence, which resulted in him being added as a prolific offender, since a residential burglary is one of the "Big Four" crimes. Mr. Lott was arrested eight additional times after this initial arrest, with 27 charges in Pasco County to include the aforementioned residential burglary, an armed burglary of an automobile, an additional burglary of an occupied dwelling, and nine additional counts of burglary auto on July 16, 2017. Despite our best efforts with providing resources, Mr. Lott continued to offend.

Sheriff's Administration
8700 Citizen Drive
New Port Richey, FL 34654
727-847-5878

District I
7432 Little Road
New Port Richey, FL 34654
727-847-5878

District II
36409 State Road 52
Dade City, FL 33525
352-518-5000

District III
11530 Trinity Boulevard
Trinity, FL 34655
727-372-5920

Pasco Detention Center
20101 Central Boulevard
Land O' Lakes, FL 34637
813-996-6982

In addition, we must unfortunately point out that Mr. Lott's mother also overdosed. While this is not meant as a commentary on her or Mr. Lott, it does serve to show that there were other issues ongoing in Mr. Lott's life and that, while Mr. Lott's suicide is tragic, it is irresponsible of the Times to assert that this was in any way associated with the Prolific Offender list or Intelligence Led Policing and demonstrates a bias against law enforcement, we would encourage the Times to paint the entire picture instead of solely focusing on law enforcement interactions caused by a result of Mr. Lott's actions, as listed above. This type of rhetoric, sharing unproven rumors and innuendo without fact or consideration of other facts, only seeks to drive a wedge between law enforcement and the community we serve. We would, again, assert that the Times has provided no facts to support their assertion that Mr. Lott's death was caused by the Pasco Sheriff's Office in any way, shape or form.

Instead, we contend, substance abuse and mental health are unfortunate scourges in our society, which the Pasco Sheriff's Office is continuing to work to address every day. The issues of substance abuse and mental health are the driving force that led to the creation of the Behavioral Health Intervention Team (BHIT), that sees the Pasco Sheriff's Office proactively reaching out to those in need to offer services and intervention. It is unfortunate that these healthcare issues (mental health and substance abuse) too often become law enforcement issues and we would encourage the Times, instead of placing blame on the Sheriff's Office for Mr. Lott's death, to join with us as we actively advocate for additional mental health and substance abuse resources to continue to better serve our community.

Regarding Rio Wojtecki, who the Times reports was listed as on a Top 5 list when he was 15, we can confirm this based on his prior arrest on December 6, 2018 for charges of both business burglary and burglary dwelling and for additional reasons described below. Again, these are "Big Four" offenses which we are actively working to address in our community to better protect and serve our citizens (something which we will address later in this memo).

Mr. Wojtecki was made a District 3 Top 5 due to this prior "Big Four" arrest but also due to his ongoing criminal network and associations. Mr. Wojtecki was in a confirmed criminal network with previous Top 5 individuals, and he is still, to this day, associating with numerous individuals who have "Big Four" arrest histories and are documented gang members. In addition, at the time of Mr. Wojtecki's placement into the Top 5, he was on probation and he remains on probation until June 20, 2021 with a curfew and required, random drug screenings.

Regarding the Times' reporting that Mr. Wojtecki was held in the back of a squad car for a possible violation of probation, we believe the incident in question occurred on December 8, 2019 during a probation check during his curfew (which is from 6pm until 6am). Mr. Wojtecki was not at his residence, despite the curfew being in place. Mr. Wojtecki was later located at another residence and he was held until contact could be made with his Probation Officer to verify this location was approved and did not violate his probation. Again, we stress that this incident has nothing to do with Prolific Offender checks or the ILP program but, instead, is due to his probation.

Further, while we are limited in the information we can provide as it is active criminal intelligence, we do refute the Times' assertion that Mr. Wojtecki is not an active gang member. While we cannot

provide the information as it is active criminal intelligence, we dispute this assertion in the strongest possible terms.

Mr. Wojtecki has been arrested two times in Pasco County and has a total of three charges (burglary business, burglary dwelling and battery).

Regarding Vaughn Smith, Jr., we would first like to address the claim by the Times that the Pasco Sheriff's Office, during a Prolific Offender check, "lined the block" with police cars. Of the eight prolific offender checks conducted at Mr. Smith, Jr.'s residence, there were never more than three units on the call, and three units on a call happened on only one occasion. However, the incident we believe the Times is referring to likely occurred on December 11, 2016 when six units were on the call due to an attempt to locate Mr. Smith, Jr. regarding an active probable cause affidavit in reference to multiple burglaries (which is related to the Facebook post the Times references and which will be addressed later in this memo).

The fact that six units were on this call also demonstrates, based on the circumstances of the crime committed on December 10, 2016, in which Mr. Smith, Jr. fled the scene of the crime, the thought that, perhaps, Mr. Smith, Jr. would attempt to flee a second time since he had already demonstrated a propensity to flee from law enforcement. Again, we would like to stress that this has nothing to do with a Prolific Offender check or the ILP program but, instead, was to take Mr. Smith, Jr. into custody regarding a probable cause affidavit for a crime in which he was the suspect.

The Times' also asserts that Mr. Smith, Jr.'s father, Vaughn Smith, Sr., was once held in the back of a patrol car. It appears that this incident occurred in May of 2019 when the Pasco Sheriff's Office was looking for Tyrone Smith, Vaughn Smith, Sr.'s brother, not Vaughn Smith, Jr., as the Times seems to assert. Vaughn Smith, Sr. and Tyrone look alike and this was explained to Vaughn Smith, Sr. at that time, and the deputy apologized for the confusion. Again, this incident had nothing to do with a Prolific Offender check or the ILP program but was, instead, in an attempt to solve a crime by locating Tyrone Smith.

However, the most egregious portion of the Times' reporting on Vaughn Smith, Jr. is the Times' assertion that he was posted on the Pasco Sheriff's Office Facebook page before he was arrested. The implication by the Times is that this was done in a harassing way or to somehow harass the Smith family. Instead, if the Times had simply reviewed the post (linked here: <https://www.facebook.com/pascosheriff/photos/a.204821599556058/1251119348259606>) from December 10, 2016 the Times would see that the Pasco Sheriff's Office was actively trying to solve a burglary spree in the Dupree Lakes subdivision and that Vaughn Smith, Jr. was a suspect in that robbery that was captured on surveillance footage. It is disappointing that the Times would take the stance that attempting to bring justice to the victims of a crime, and using all resources necessary to locate the suspect of a crime, as is protocol, is somehow "harassing" an individual when he was captured on surveillance video during the commission of this crime.

A further review of the referenced Facebook post, also reveals that Mr. Smith, Jr. was an associate on this crime spree with Khyle Durham. Unfortunately, Khyle Durham was recently involved in another

armed burglary where he was shot and killed by a homeowner. We, again, do not bring this up to pass judgement on Mr. Durham or Mr. Smith, Jr. but to instead show the type of information and history that can be gathered through criminal networks and associates. It is not surprising to see those associated with criminals and criminal actions continue to reoffend, as evidenced by Mr. Durham, a premise of the Intelligence Led Policing philosophy and the Prolific Offender checks as we attempt to break this cycle of recidivism.

We encourage the Times to strongly reconsider their reporting of this event and the implication that this Facebook post was done as harassment.

Vaughn Smith, Jr. has been arrested three times in Pasco County, twice for burglary auto and once for burglary dwelling and has 17 total charges in Pasco County (with 11 of those being burglary auto charges from the burglary spree discussed above on December 10, 2016 where the Times asserts that the Pasco Sheriff's Office was "harassing" Vaughn Smith, Jr.).

Regarding Dalanea Taylor, the Times reports that the Pasco Sheriff's Office checked on Ms. Taylor "for years" after she was released from prison, including a Prolific Offender check in the early morning hours of January 1, 2018. This check on January 1, 2018, for the record, was conducted at 7:45AM during which Ms. Taylor and the officer had what was documented in the call notes as a "courteous" conversation to make sure that Ms. Taylor was remaining out of trouble.

Ms. Taylor has been arrested 14 times in Pasco County, beginning first on August 1, 2012 for an auto burglary and has a total of 55 charges in Pasco County including numerous burglary autos, grand theft, armed burglary, firearm theft and dozens of other charges. This amount of charges, which continued over a period of at least four years from 2012 until 2016, explain her continued presence on the Prolific Offender list. As previously provided to the Times in response to questions, this list is reviewed quarterly and it can take offenders periods of no criminal activity before they can move off of the list, especially when an individual has 55 charges, most related to "Big Four" activities.

Regarding Jahheen Winters, he was first added to the Prolific Offender list on October 1, 2019. By this point, Mr. Winters had been arrested five times in Pasco, including for two burglary dwellings, a vehicle theft, and two domestic batteries, one of which was also charged as an aggravated assault. During this period, from his first arrest on July 22, 2018 until he was added to the Prolific Offender list, Mr. Winters had eight charges in Pasco County. Unfortunately, as witnessed by his charges (including violent charges), just because an individual is 12 does not make him or her incapable of committing crime, a trend which will be addressed later using the Times' own reporting.

Regarding Lorenzo and Devon Gary, the latter of whom the Times states was named a Top 5 offender despite being arrested "only for misdemeanor battery and grand theft auto" (the Times reports the grand theft auto charge was reduced to misdemeanor trespassing, therefore, according to the Times, making Devon Gary ineligible to be included as a prolific offender), we again point back to the previous answers provided to the Times. The Top 5 is different from the Prolific Offender checks. Devon Gary was included in the Top 5 not due to his previous history but, instead, because of four active Juvenile Pick-

Up Orders (JPOs) he had at that time for burglary, resisting without violence, petit theft, and Battery on Officer/Firefighter/EMT. Neither Lorenzo nor Devon Gary was documented as a prolific offender.

Lorenzo Gary, though, is a prime example of how the ILP and Prolific Offender program functions. He has been arrested 12 previous times in Pasco County but, yet, was not documented as a prolific offender. His arrests were mainly domestic in nature or involved drug activity. The Prolific Offender program, as discussed above in this memo and also in previous answers to the Times, focuses heavily on the “Big Four” crimes.

Regarding Donnie McDougall, we can confirm that we have visited his home to conduct prolific offender checks but we have also visited the residence due to criminal activity by his brother, Anthony McDougall, who resides at the same address and is currently on juvenile probation. It is interesting that the Times does not note this fact in their findings, instead implying that all visits were for Donnie McDougall, which is not an accurate depiction of facts. Regardless, Donnie McDougall has been arrested 20 times in Pasco County and has 38 charges.

In addition, the Times also implies that Mr. McDougall’s mother, Tammy Heilman, was a victim of harassment from the Pasco Sheriff’s Office, specifically referring to an incident where Ms. Heilman was stopped by Pasco Sheriff’s Office deputies after leaving her residence. The Times’ own reporting notes that Ms. Heilman failed to secure a child safely in her vehicle before departing, something that was witnessed by deputies on scene. For this reason which is, again, separate from the ILP or Prolific Offender checks, Ms. Heilman was stopped and, during this stop, she failed to comply with lawful orders. The Pasco Sheriff’s Office would again assert that the Times’ reporting fails to note the facts in this incident, specifically that Ms. Heilman broke the law by failing to secure her child properly before operating her motor vehicle, which placed her child in danger and required a reaction from the Pasco Sheriff’s Office.

Regarding the other, general assertions that the Times makes, specifically that juveniles are a high proportion of the Prolific Offender list, we would point the Times to several studies, including several conducted by the Times itself, that find that juvenile offenders are disproportionately committing property crimes such as burglary auto and auto theft, which are among the “Big Four” crimes which we continue to work in our community.

Just a small sample of reporting on this is documented below:

- <http://caruthers.institute/studies/pinellas-teen-auto-theft/>
- <https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/2017/investigations/florida-pinellas-auto-theft-kids-hot-wheels/>
- <https://www.tampabay.com/news/pinellas/2019/10/29/juvenile-auto-thieves-still-plague-pinellas-county/>
- <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2019/10/25/teen-auto-theft-in-pinellas-is-still-an-epidemic/>
- <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2020/02/14/is-st-petersburg-moving-closer-to-solving-the-juvenile-auto-theft-crisis-editorial/>

With so much attention paid to this, with the Times even going so far as to call auto thefts by teenagers in our neighboring Pinellas County an “epidemic” and a “crisis,” it is incredibly disappointing to now find the Times suggesting that people who commit these crimes should not be addressed, and that this issue does not deserve focus but is instead just “harassment” by the Pasco Sheriff’s Office. Instead, as the Times should well know based on previous reporting, this is an attempt to proactively address a very serious issue in our community and in communities throughout the Tampa Bay area as many of these same individuals offend in other jurisdictions throughout Tampa Bay.

Finally, it also seems, based on the reporting provided so far by the Times, that basic law enforcement functions such as attempting to locate a suspect in a crime, conducting probation checks and arresting an individual for committing a crime all seem to be painted as “harassment” at the hands of the Intelligence Led Policing philosophy. This assertion could not be further from the truth but, instead, shows an agency proactively attempting to solve and address crime in our community without regard to bias such as age, gender or race but instead through a fact based program focused on those who commit crimes.

We suspect, as well, that this misunderstanding and the fact that the Times constantly includes the Top 5 list and the Prolific Offender list together, despite the fact that the Times has been told in previous answers to questions that these are separate programs, leads to a misunderstanding of facts. This would explain the Times’ analysis that several people do not meet the score to be on a Prolific Offender list and, likely, would lead to an analysis that shows that those people are not, in fact, on a Prolific Offender list (such as Lorenzo and Devon Gary, who are discussed previously in this memo) but instead are being sought for a different reason, such as Devon Gary who the Times’ reporting did not show had four active Juvenile Pick-Up Orders.

In conclusion, we again would like to reiterate our firm stance that Intelligence Led Policing has worked to reduce property crimes in Pasco County and continues to work in agencies in our area that also use this model such as Hillsborough County. This success is documented in the below chart that shows a decrease in property crimes from 2011 (when Sheriff Nocco first became Sheriff) through 2019 (the most recent data available) as reported by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

This reduction in property crimes includes a 74.4% reduction in residential burglaries and a 20.7% reduction in auto thefts, along with an overall reduction of property crimes of 35.6%. It is also important to note that these reductions in crime run counter to our growing population in Pasco County (as reported by the United States Census Bureau, the population of Pasco County has grown by 89,242 people from April 1, 2010 through July 1, 2019, data is available at this link: <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-counties-total.html>).

Group	Group Statistics				Offense	Detail Statistics			
	2011	2019	Change	% Change		2011	2019	Change	% Change
Burglary	3436	993	-2443	-71.1%	Residence	2922	748	-2174	-74.4%
					Non-Residence	514	245	-269	-52.3%
Larceny	8373	4969	-3404	-40.7%	Pocket Picking	5	6	1	20.0%
					Purse Snatching	1	0	-1	-100.0%
					Shoplifting	1298	1068	-230	-17.7%
					From Motor Vehicle	1798	826	-972	-54.1%
					Motor Vehicle Parts	612	485	-127	-20.8%
					Bicycles	393	331	-62	-15.8%
					From Building	0	2	2	
					From Coin Oper Device	23	10	-13	-56.5%
					All Other Larceny	4243	2241	-2002	-47.2%
Motor Vehicle Theft	571	494	-77	-13.5%	Auto	213	169	-44	-20.7%
					Truck & Buses	155	162	7	4.5%
					Motorcycles	114	89	-25	-21.9%
					Other Vehicles	89	74	-15	-16.9%
Total	12,380	7,973	-4407	-35.6%		12,380	7,973	-4407	-35.6%

This reduction in property crime has a direct, positive impact on the lives of the citizens of Pasco County and, for that, we will not apologize. Our first and primary mission is to serve and protect our community and the Intelligence Led Policing philosophy assists us in achieving that mission.

The Pasco Sheriff's Office stands by the Intelligence Led Policing philosophy and continue to encourage the Times to re-examine their reporting in light of the facts provided in this memo.

We, again, point to the lengthy arrest history of those that the Times has asked us to address and to the fact that the Times' own reporting found an "epidemic" and "crisis" in the county just to our south and would strongly encourage the Times to reconsider their reporting and findings especially considering the reduction in crime over the last eight years.

Two-sided card left behind with previous offenders during Prolific Offender checks (referenced earlier in the memo):

Early Learning Coalition
7334 Little Rd. #102, New Port Richey, FL 34654
(727) 569-1004

RAP House
7522 Plathe Rd., New Port Richey, FL 34653
(727) 835-1777

State Attorney's Office (WS)
(727) 815-7194
(727) 815-7152

Sober Solutions
8056 Old Co. Rd. 54, New Port Richey, FL 34653
(727) 372-2010

HEADS
Various Locations (use referral forms)
(813) 754-5555

RN Cancer Guides
26852 Tanic Dr. #101, Wesley Chapel, FL 33544
(813) 994-9028

New Hope Cancer Center
7651 Medical Dr., Hudson, FL 34667
(727) 862-8170

Disability Rights of Florida
www.disabilityrightflorida.org
800-342-0823

Hope Youth Ranch
17933 East Rd., Hudson, FL 34667
(727) 232-0119

Pasco County Housing Authority
pascocountyhousing.org
(352) 567-0848

2-1-1 United Way Pasco Hotline
Dial 211
Main Line 1-877-828-8929



Pasco Sheriff's Office
"Helping those in Need"

Quick Resource Guide

Accelerated Resolution Therapy
USF1 2901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33612
(813) 974-9266

Bay Area Legal Services
Various Locations
(800) 625-2257

Sequel Care
7621 Little Rd., #200D, New Port Richey, FL 34654
(727) 494-7609

Baycare Behavioral Health
6205 Trouble Creek Rd., New Port Richey, FL 34653
(727) 841-4466

Baycare Behavioral Health
8002 King Helie Blvd., New Port Richey, FL 34653
(727) 841-4430

Baycare Dade City
14527 7th St., Dade City, FL 33523
(352) 521-3351

Sunrise DV Center
12724 Smith Rd., Dade City, FL 33525
(352) 521-3358

Salvation Army DV
P.O. Box 5517 Hudson, FL 34674
(727) 856-5797

Pasco Kids First
7615 Little Rd., New Port Richey, FL 34654
(727) 845-8080