



Rick Staly, Sheriff
FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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NEWS RELEASE

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Toddler Found Wandering Alone, Living in Deplorable Conditions Leads to Man's Arrest

BUNNELL, Fla. — On September 27, the Flagler County Sheriff's Office recovered an unattended toddler and made an arrest after a call from a concerned citizen led to a welfare check and the discovery of deplorable living conditions in a home with multiple children.

That evening, a woman called the FCSO Communications Center after an unattended child entered her vehicle while she was delivering groceries to a home on Barley Lane in Palm Coast. The woman said the child, who she estimated to be between 1 and 2 years old, then got out of the vehicle and started walking across the street before eventually walking into an open garage.

A short time later, deputies arrived at the home on Barley Lane, knocked on the door, and could see trash and discarded food on the floor from the front window. Nicholas Carter, 39, of Palm Coast opened the door and stated the child, who he confirmed to be 2 years old, walked to the edge of the driveway unattended and was only outside for a few minutes. Carter said he left the door to the garage open and was in another room when the child walked out. Carter then told deputies he lived in the home with five children (ages 2, 4, 8, 15, and 16 years old), the children's mother, and a roommate.

Deputies asked to check the home and Carter consented. Deputies said as soon as they walked inside, they could smell a strong odor of feces, urine, mold, and mildew. Large clumps of fecal matter were observed inside the home while the children were walking around barefoot. As deputies continued to walk through the home, they described the environment as unsafe and horrid living conditions. In the laundry room, several clumps of fuzzy fecal matter were found, indicating they were several days old.

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Discarded garbage and food were also seen in the laundry room.

Upon entering the kitchen, deputies observed dirty dishes, roaches, flies, rotting food, and food waste scattered on the floors and countertops. Knives were also observed left out and easily accessible to the young children.

Carter told deputies the young children slept in the master bedroom. Inside the room, deputies discovered more trash and urine on the floor. Two beds with blankets and pillows were also on the floor. Fecal matter was seen in the closet along with numerous flies.

Deputies then asked Carter to step outside to talk and he stated the toddler liked to hang out in the garage. There, deputies found several power tools, exposed wires, sharp objects, a BB gun, and a smoking pipe used to smoke marijuana — all within reach of the toddler.

Deputies then spoke with the roommate, who said he's lived in the house for the past two years. He described the living conditions as "frowned upon." The roommate also said Carter was the primary caregiver for the children due to him being home more than the mother.

Carter was asked about the living conditions in the home, which he called "a little dirty." He could not give deputies a reasonable explanation for why there was feces and urine throughout the house, as well as why there were multiple sharp objects within the young children's reach.

Carter was arrested for Child Neglect without Great Bodily Harm for failing to provide proper care, supervision, and services necessary to maintain the children's health and safety, and the Florida Department of Children and Families was notified. Carter was not cooperative with deputies while being handcuffed, and he was additionally arrested for Obstruction without Violence. He was transported to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility and later released on bond.

This isn't the first time FCSO deputies have responded to this home. Since January 2023 there have been 16 separate occasions, The most notable being, on March 4, 2023, a person called about a child found wandering in the roadway. Then on December 30, 2023, Carter called the Palm Coast Fire Department for a child having a seizure from ingesting marijuana. Carter was also arrested and charged with Child Neglect on February 28, 2020.

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Nicholas Carter (Flagler County Jail Mugshot)

“Five children, three under the age of 10, living in deplorable conditions with an adult who obviously doesn’t care about these children,” said Sheriff Rick Staly. “On top of it all, FCSO has a history with this guy, in one case a child ate marijuana and had a seizure while under this man’s care. Hopefully, this time DCF will take serious action to turn the homelife around for these children, the least of which is to learn how to be a parent and clean up his house. I also thank the citizen that ‘saw something and said something’ so deputies could intervene.”

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