

WINTER HAVEN POLICE

125 N. Lake Silver Dr., NW • Winter Haven, FL 33881 • Phone: 863-291-5858 • www.winterhavenpd.com

Date: Jan. 22. 2014
Time: 3:00 P.M.
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WINTER HAVEN – Quick response from multiple law enforcement agencies helped to avoid what could have been tragic results as a woman drove a stolen vehicle the wrong way on Havendale Blvd.

Thirty-seven year-old Heather Johnson of Polk City is behind bars charged with Grand Theft Auto after she took the keys to a vehicle when the owner gave her a ride. Additional charges are pending on Johnson.

Here is what occurred:

On 1-22-14 at approximately 10:10 a.m., 79 year-old Thomas Stewart was at Walgreens in Auburndale when Heather Johnson (DOB 1-8-77, 127 Clearwater Ave., Polk City) approached him and asked for a ride to the CVS store in Auburndale. Stewart reportedly took Johnson to CVS and then she asked for a ride home.

Along the way, Johnson asked Stewart to stop at the boat ramp just off Hwy 92 at Lake Pansy. When the pair got out of the truck, Johnson grabbed Stewart's keys, got in the driver's side and left Stewart behind. Stewart immediately called 9-1-1 and a BOLO (Be On The Lookout) was issued for the 2010 GMC Sierra pickup truck.

An Auburndale police officer spotted the vehicle in the area of Charlotte Rd. in Auburndale. The vehicle traveled through a field on Lee Street and back out onto Charlotte ultimately cutting through the baseball field of Auburndale High School towards Stadium Rd. The Polk County Sheriff's Office helicopter responded to the area and kept a visual on the vehicle, reporting to officers in the direction as Johnson headed onto Havendale Blvd. towards Winter Haven. At this point, the front passenger tire had blown and the vehicle was riding on the rim.



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Ground units had lost sight of the vehicle, but as Johnson headed eastbound on Havendale Blvd., the helicopter pilot continued to direct officers up ahead of her movements when she crossed into the westbound lanes at 21st. St. and continued east bound in the westbound lanes, all while sparks continued to fly from the vehicle. Law enforcement from Winter Haven and Lake Alfred headed traffic off along Havendale in order to avert a possibly tragic situation. As Johnson approached Spring Lake Plaza, she crossed back over into the eastbound lanes and continued over Hwy. 17 onto Ave. T, NE. The helicopter pilot was instrumental in keeping officers on the ground aware of the direction of travel of the vehicle, which allowed officers to position themselves ahead of the stolen vehicle.

The vehicle finally came to a stop in an open field in the area of 8th St. NW and Ave. T, NE in Winter Haven. When the vehicle hit the dirt in the field, the front end dug in and would not go any farther. Officers converged on the vehicle and arrested Johnson. Due to a slight cut on her hand, she was taken to Winter Haven Hospital by ambulance, then booked into the Polk County Jail.

“This is a prime example of law enforcement agencies working together to assure the publics’ safety,” said Chef Gary Hester. “Everyone worked together making sure a visual was kept on the suspect while innocent citizens were kept out of harm’s way.”