



Putnam County Justice Center
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 4/21/2016

Amber Alert Resolved

PUTNAM COUNTY, TN – Yesterday afternoon an incident occurred at Prescott South Middle School (PSMS) in which a twelve year-old student was taken from the school by his non-custodial mother. The school immediately called in members of the Cookeville Police Department and Putnam County Sheriff's Department to investigate.

An Amber Alert was subsequently issued. As a result of that Amber Alert a motorist in White County noticed a vehicle matching the description of the suspect's vehicle parked at a residence in White County this morning.

White County Sheriff's Department personnel, including Sheriff Oddie Shoupe, drove to the residence and located the twelve year-old boy and his mother, Sheila Merriman (aka Sheila Randolph). The boy, who was unharmed, was returned to the State's custody. Ms. Merriman was charged with Custodial Interference and transported to the Putnam County Jail where she is being held on a \$10,000 bond.

"I am thankful that this incident was resolved quickly and safely," said Major Terry Hembree of the Putnam County Sheriff's Department. "Emotions run high whenever a child is thought to be missing. I know that everyone involved worked diligently to ensure this boy's safety. I want our citizens to know that we take every threat to our children seriously and will use every tool we have – including the Amber Alert system – to make sure that they are safe. In this case, it turned out that it was a non-custodial parent but we cannot afford to take chances and must respond consistently every time."

The Cookeville Police Department and Putnam County Sheriff's Department would like to acknowledge the assistance received from the Tennessee Fusion Center, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the White County Sheriff's Department in the successful resolution of this incident.

Putnam County School System Superintendent Mr. Jerry Boyd stated, "On behalf of the Putnam County Board of Education, I would like to thank our law enforcement professionals for their diligent teamwork in finding the student and the PSMS faculty, staff, and administrators for providing the necessary collaboration to support the successful recovery."

Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris added, "Most law enforcement deputies and officers are parents and are deeply affected by any case involving children. There were a large number of law enforcement officers who worked through the night to make sure this boy was safe. I want to commend all of them as well as the teachers and school personnel who stayed at the school late into the night to provide us with whatever assistance that was needed in order for us to successfully track and apprehend the individuals involved."

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Both Sheriff Farris and Police Chief Randy Evans know that open lines of communication and strong working relationships among local agencies and organizations lead to crime resolution that is by far always much more successful. Sheriff Farris strives hard to ensure that the Putnam County Sheriff's Office works with all local agencies and organizations as seamlessly as possible to make sure we accomplish this in our county.

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