

Press Release



Chief of Police Gerald Butler

For Immediate Release

January 6, 2026

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Ph. (386) 247-1148

Lake City Detective Receives Sheriff's Commendation

On Tuesday, January 6, 2026, the Lake City Police Department announced that Detective Richard Poteat has received a Sheriff's Commendation from the Polk County Sheriff's Office for his work during Operation Child Protector VII, an online child-exploitation enforcement initiative.

During the operation, Detective Poteat worked in an undercover capacity and engaged in online communications with an individual believed to be targeting children. When the suspect began sharing explicit material and making additional incriminating statements, detectives preserved evidence and coordinated follow-up actions to identify the suspect and protect potential victims.

Using investigative resources and information obtained during the undercover communications, detectives identified the suspect as Courtney Robert Stanhope, a registered sex offender who was residing in Montana. Detectives obtained an arrest warrant alleging multiple felony offenses, including promoting the sexual performance of a child, transmitting harmful material to a minor, use of a computer to solicit a child, and unlawful use of a two-way communication device.

On September 30, 2025, Stanhope was arrested at his residence in Baker, Montana, by the Fallon County Sheriff's

"Detective Poteat's work reflects the highest standards of modern policing and child protection," said Chief of Police Gerald Butler. "These cases are complex, time-consuming, and disturbing by nature, but they matter. We're proud of Detective Poteat's commitment, and we're grateful to the Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Fallon County Sheriff's Office for their partnership in holding offenders accountable."

The Lake City Police Department remains committed to investigating internet crimes against children and working with law enforcement partners to identify, locate, and arrest individuals who exploit minors.

Anyone with information regarding any crime is encouraged to contact the Lake City Police Department at (386) 752-4343 or report information anonymously through the LCPD TIPS line at (386) 719-2068 or Crime Stoppers of Columbia County at (386) 754-7099.



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Press Release

LAKE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT



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**Sheriff's Commendation presented
to Detective Richard Poteat**



**Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd
and Detective Richard Poteat**



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