

*Scott Owen, Sheriff*

*Lt. Jeff Prentice, Patrol Division  
Sgt. Herb Cline, Investigations  
Lt. James Pendergraft, Jail Administrator*



*Jon Copeland, Undersheriff*

*Lt. Ryan Bevard, Transport Division  
Sgt. Carey Duniphin Training Coordinator  
Sgt. Mitch Doyle Asst. Jail Administrator*

Press Release – For Immediate Release

July 29, 2024

On Sunday, July 28<sup>th</sup> 2024, at approximately 9:35 am, Washington County Sheriff's Office patrol deputies were dispatched to the 400000 block of W 3950 Rd (near Vera, Oklahoma). Deputies were informed of a possible child abuse and/or neglect involving a fifteen-year-old female. Deputies, along with the Department of Human Services Child Welfare arrived to find an adolescent female tied up in the yard and had apparently been sleeping on a remnant of carpet. Deputies learned the female was in the area visiting family with her family who reside in Texas.

During the deputy's investigation, it was determined the fifteen-year-old had been outside and secured to a tree with ratchet straps and had been for over 24 hours. WCSO Investigators arrived and further learned the child has possible mental development issues and the child's father, Johnny Lee James, had tied the child up for disciplinary reasons. WCSO Investigators also learned there has been investigations in Texas for questionable actions, involving the father, in the past. WCSO Deputies interviewed Mr. James' girlfriend, Kayla Clark, who confirmed Mr. James is the father of the child and she knew about the child being tied to the tree. Mr. James claimed the child has problems urinating and defecating while indoors and if she was outdoors there would not be any mess. Mr. James claims this is due to the child wanting to live with her mother.

While speaking with Ms. Clark, deputies discovered she did not call anyone or say anything because she was "frazzled". Family members, who were interviewed, said they were hesitant to call authorities because they are afraid of Mr. James.

The fifteen-year-old was taken to a hospital where she was treated for injuries. The Department of Human Services (Child Welfare division) took the child into state's custody. Several other children in the home were also taken into the custody of DHS Child Welfare. Deputies arrested Mr. James and Ms. Clark on a charge of child abuse/neglect. The duo will be seen in court today at 1:15 pm for their initial appearance in District Court. The District Attorney's office was briefed on the case yesterday as the investigation proceeded. WCSO Investigators will continue to follow up with this incident as well as any other possible incidents in Washington County.

Below are the booking photos of Mr. James and Ms. Clark.

Jon Copeland - Undersheriff

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*To Serve and Protect*

