



***Gulf County Sheriff's Office***

***Sheriff Mike Harrison***

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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
August 1, 2016

### **Registered Sex Offender Arrested**

On Friday, July 22, 2016, the Gulf County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) received a report from the Department of Children & Families (DCF) alleging sexual abuse of a child under the age of twelve. The GCSO Criminal Investigations Division (CID) began an investigation into the allegations working with the Children's Advocacy Center in Panama City, Florida. Investigators quickly learned the suspect in the investigation was a registered sex offender Thomas Lavern Vanheiden (43) who was residing in Wewahitchka but working in Bay County.

On Monday, August 1, 2016, GCSO Investigators obtained an arrest warrant for Vanheiden and contacted the Bay County Sheriff's Office Warrants Division requesting assistance in apprehending him. BCSO located Vanheiden at his place of employment and placed him under arrest. He was transported to the Bay County Jail awaiting extradition to Gulf County.

Vanheiden is a registered sex offender and required to re-register every three months with the Gulf County Sheriff's Office pursuant to Florida State Statute 943.0435

Prepared by: Lt. Paul Beasley  
Approved by: Sheriff Mike Harrison