



PD assists child thrown from horse

Employees of Public Defender Matt Shirk work all hours of the day, often visit dangerous locations to analyze active crime scenes and scour neighborhoods to talk to people who may have witnessed an alleged crime. Last month an investigation required a visit to a Hilliard neighborhood where investigator Paula DeLuca (of the Nassau County Public Defender's Office) was interviewing witnesses for a case.

However, the danger DeLuca encountered was not related to the particular investigation, but rather the drive back to the office on a rural road where she saw a six-year-old girl thrown from a horse.

"On the way back from Hilliard I was about a quarter of a mile behind a van on Middle Road when I encountered two girls on horseback," said DeLuca. "Once the van passed the girls, the horse on which the younger girl sat was evidently spooked by the vehicle and threw her up in the air before she landed on her back. As I approached the crying child, her companion was consoling her. That's when we noticed both horses running down the road. The driver of the van that was also sharing the road assisted me in rounding up the fleeing horses."

DeLuca continued, "I was really scared that the little girl who weighed approximately 50 pounds may have severely injured her back in the fall so I checked her out and I called 911. A call to her mother the very next day gave me great news that her little girl was fine and received no serious injuries. The work of a PD investigator is certainly exciting and there is never a way to predict what will take place during a day's work!"

DeLuca has been with the Office of the Public Defender since January 2009. The Nassau County resident was recently reassigned to handle the caseload in Nassau following more than two years of service in the Duval County office.