

HARRISON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF

MATT HALEY

P.O. BOX 1480♦GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI 39502♦228-896-0606

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release

On April 17, 2025, Sheriff Matt Haley released information regarding the outcome of the case involving 6-year-old Gracelynn Vick. On Sunday, April 13, 2025, Harrison County Deputies responded to F Taylor Road in reference to 6-year-old Gracelynn being reported missing by family at the residence. During the search for Gracelynn, she was located in the vicinity of the residence inside a barrel and determined to be deceased by unknown causes.

Sheriff Haley says that through the investigation, it was found that no foul play is suspected. The residence had security cameras that covered the area where the barrel containing Gracelynn was located. After reviewing the video multiple times, Investigators determined that while playing outside, Gracelynn went inside the barrel herself and closed the lid from the inside. This caused the lid to be stuck and trapped Gracelynn inside the barrel.

During the review of the video, Investigators verified nobody else ever walked to the area where Gracelynn was located until after the family began searching. According to Sheriff Haley, there was no way to get to that area without coming into the view of the camera, and all family and volunteers in the area of the barrel at any time were not seen tampering with it. Investigators also noted that Gracelynn's mother came outside, noticed Gracelynn missing, and notified her family and 911 within minutes.

The results of the autopsy further backed up this evidence. The Medical Examiner's Office notified Investigators there were no signs of trauma, sexual abuse, or neglect. The exact cause of death is still under investigation by the Medical Examiner's Office, and a report will be filed in the coming months as they complete their investigation.

Investigators and Crime Scene Technicians formed a forensic recreation of the incident. This recreation led Investigators to believe that with the heat index on April 13th, Gracelynn would have experienced the combination of heat stress and limited oxygen supply while inside the barrel which would have led to her death. This effect would be similar to that of a child being stuck in a hot car during the summer.

Sheriff Haley wants to again thank the many agencies and citizens who responded to F Taylor Road on April 13th to assist in the search for Gracelynn without hesitation. This is still currently an open investigation. This has been an unbelievably tragic event that has shaken our community. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Gracelynn Vick.

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Approved for Release:

Matt Haley, Sheriff, Harrison County, Mississippi