

FL sheriff posts “blue & red house” map on Facebook, ignores threats to registrants

written by Sandy | June 13, 2022



By Sandy . . . “I’m worried for my family,” he wrote. “Today the DeSoto County Sheriff’s Office decided to put a picture of a map of all the houses where registered citizens live on its Facebook page. The comments that were allowed are absolutely disgusting.”

As I read the email, I could feel the fear that the writer was expressing. I’m the communications director for the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws – NARSOL – and I frequently get emails from all over the country from people required to register on sexual offense registries. This one came from DeSoto County, Florida and had an urgent tone. I located the Facebook page and found the comments that the Florida registrant referred to.

“Open season?” wrote someone named Josh and quickly had a response. “Where can we get tags?”

The response to that from the first writer is the most chilling of all. “They have their address on each location and they can’t own firearms so . . .”

Each of the comments is sprinkled liberally with hearts and thumbs-up memes, all indicative of approval. So in addition to the two men engaged in this exchange, there are a dozen or more like-minded individuals who expressed their approval of the rightness of hunting and killing fellow human beings who are helpless to defend themselves and their families because they are forbidden by law to own the means by which to do so.

And those are just the ones who took the time to click on hearts and affirmative memes.

Another DeSoto County resident, as concerned as the man who wrote me, reports that he sent an email to the sheriff’s office.

Your department is putting not only individuals who have already served their time but their families’ lives at risk too. It astonishes me that the DeSoto County Sheriff’s Office is allowing the people of Arcadia to publicly comment on its Facebook page, basically threatening to shoot any person that’s on the registry. Individuals have also stated they can get the names and addresses off the registry website and stated that the offenders are not allowed to be armed. I do not see how anyone in your department would not see this as a threat. The individuals registered at these addresses, most have spouses, children, other family members living in their homes. I am deathly afraid for these families and the individuals that I personally know on the registry. The offenders already paid their dues and served their time; not only do they have to register, DeSoto county sheriff’s department is allowing

their citizens to talk about these offenders as if they were animals to be hunted.

No response or acknowledgment was received in reply, he reports.

I called the sheriff's office. When I told the sheriff's assistant who answered his phone the reason for my call, I was transferred to the public information officer.

She was quick to point out that only a map and no addresses were on the Facebook page, a distinction apparently not made by Josh, who commented that the addresses were all "on each location."

She asked if threats were made against specific individuals. No, because to those who go hunting for human beings located by looking at the sex offender registry, it doesn't matter who you shoot; one "sex offender" is as good as another.

Finally she said she would need to view the comments herself and that she would call me back, which she did. As closely as I can remember, these were the gist of her remarks:

"They [the two commenters] aren't threatening anyone specific."

"They have the right to express their opinion. It is their first amendment right to comment."

"They aren't doing anything wrong. We [the sheriff's office] don't monitor it."

Imagine for a moment that the comments were made by a couple of guys angry with teenagers in general for their loud music and disrespect to elders and, complaining about them on Facebook, one asks, "Open season?" After receiving affirmation from his buddy in the form of, "Where can we get tags?" Guy #1 responds, "The addresses of some high schools are on the web, and they aren't allowed to have firearms at school so . . ."

Would a complaint to the sheriff's office result in, "Well, they aren't threatening anyone specific. They have a right to express their opinion. They aren't doing anything wrong"?

My primary hope and prayer are that none of the readers of what the sheriff's office does not consider a threat decides to turn it into one and moves forward with the action suggested by the Facebook post.

And my secondary one is, should that happen, that the Desoto County Sheriff's Office pursues the killers as enthusiastically as it defends their rights.