



Rick Staly, Sheriff
FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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Palm Coast Couple Arrested After Leaving Infant in Car to Drink at Bar

BUNNELL, Fla. — Flagler County Sheriff's Office deputies arrested a Palm Coast couple late Friday evening after investigating a tip of a child left unattended inside a vehicle outside a bar in Palm Coast.

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office Communications Center received the tip shortly after 10:00 p.m. When deputies arrived on scene, they located the vehicle and found an infant sleeping in a car seat that was improperly secured in the back seat. The vehicle was left unlocked with the keys in the ignition and the engine running.

While deputies were assessing the infant, a woman, later identified as Clarisse Finnegan, 28, exited the bar and approached the vehicle. She told deputies that she was the owner of the vehicle and that her husband, Norman Finnegan Jr., 60, was inside the bar. After she provided deputies with Norman's description, Norman was escorted from the bar and detained for questioning.

A witness told deputies that she first noticed the vehicle when she arrived at the bar at approximately 10:00 p.m. and that a male exited the bar around 10:15 p.m., looked inside the vehicle, and then reentered the bar.

When questioned, Clarisse told deputies that she first went inside to use the restroom and to get money from Norman for necessities to care for the infant. She further explained that after checking on the infant, she returned to the bar to see if Norman was ready to leave and while he paid for his tab, she came back outside and was immediately detained for questioning by deputies. The couple gave

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conflicting statements about Clarisse’s time inside the bar, and witnesses confirmed that both Norman and Clarisse were at the bar drinking.



Norman Finnegan, left, and Clarisse Finnegan, right (Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility mugshots)

“These two will never receive parents of the year award with this behavior,” said Sheriff Rick Staly. “It’s never acceptable to leave an infant alone inside a running vehicle—especially while inside a bar drinking. This kind of recklessness could have ended in tragedy. I want to thank the concerned citizen who reported this incident and our deputies who acted quickly to protect this innocent child.”

Norman and Clarisse Finnegan were arrested for felony child neglect without great bodily harm, a third-degree felony, and transported to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility. Norman was later released on a \$2,500 bond. Clarisse was released on her own recognizance.

The Florida Department of Children and Families is also investigating this incident.

View footage from the arrests [here](#).

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