



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Officer and Good Samaritan Citizens Thwart Vehicle Theft

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – March 3, 2021 – On Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at approximately 7:00 am, Aaron Recht (a firefighter with the Riceville Volunteer Fire Department) contacted Dispatch to advise that a man was in the road blocking traffic. The man also appeared to have blood on him. Officer Meghan Chandler was travelling on Congress Parkway and came upon the same man that Mr. Recht had observed. Although Officer Chandler was in uniform, she was in her personal vehicle as she was on her way to work.

When Officer Chandler stopped to make contact with the man, it became obvious that he was very intoxicated. He attempted to enter her vehicle and steal it. A struggle ensued and the man was able to wrestle her Taser from her duty belt. During the struggle, the man tased himself in the abdomen area. Mr. Recht was still in the area. He and a citizen bystander came to Officer Chandler's aid during the incident and helped subdue the subject.

The subject was later identified as Ricardo Santana. A subsequent investigation determined that the blood on him was the result of hitting himself in the head with a liquor bottle earlier that morning, prior to his encounter with first responders. After receiving medical attention, he was transported to the McMinn County Jail and booked on charges of Public Intoxication, Resisting Arrest, Attempted Motor Vehicle Theft and Theft of Property.

Chief Couch, of the Athens Police Department, said "I'm very proud of the way that Officer Chandler handled this situation. I'm also exceedingly thankful to serve in a city that has citizens who are willing to help an officer in need."