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## Stolen statue of sheep found, returned to Samantha home

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Tuscaloosa County sheriff's deputies helped return a well-known statute to its rightful place Friday.

The glass encased statues of a shepherd accompanied by a sheep have been fixtures at the Williamson home on U.S. Highway 43 in Samantha since 1999 and well known to travelers and residents of north Tuscaloosa.

A woman called the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office on Friday morning to report seeing the sheep statue on the side of Paul Howell Road. A sheriff's deputy who patrols and lives in the area knew exactly where the sheep belonged.

Another deputy visited the Williamson home and verified that the sheep and the shepherd's staff were indeed missing.

Retired logger Johnny Williamson had the statues commissioned by artist Willie Logan, who carved them from cypress wood from the Sipsey River Swamp. Many people believe that the shepherd is meant to represent Jesus, but Williamson said it is meant to represent the Good Shepherd in Psalm 23, said his daughter Becky Williamson-Martin. She said that she never considered removing the statues after her father's death in April 2013 at the age of 78.

"Having the statue made was an idea that came to me one day," Williamson told The Tuscaloosa News in 2002. "I thought it was unique and a good testimony of my faith."

Williamson's five children established the Johnny Williamson Good Shepherd Foundation to continue his legacy of love for others, said his daughter. As of March 31, the foundation had assisted 42 families with food, heating and clothing. More than 500 people attended the Shepherd Hill Opry held at the property on what would have been Williamson's 79th birthday in April.

Williamson-Martin said that one of the sheep's ears is broken and the back legs are cracked.

"But he's back in position, pretty much intact," she said.

For information about the family's foundation, visit <http://www.johnnywilliamsongoodshepherdfoundation.com>.

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*Courtesy of Becky Williamson-Martin*

Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's deputies return a statue of a sheep to the Williamson home on U.S. Highway 43 North. Pictured are Deputy Jeremy Hammack, Deputy Saben Ashby, Deputy Keith Fair and Ricky Williamson. The statue of the shepherd and sheep was erected in the yard on U.S. Highway 43 North in 1999 by Williamson's father, retired logger Johnny Williamson. Artist Willie Logan carved them from cypress wood from the Sipsey River Swamp.

