



METRICH Enforcement Unit

Information Bulletin

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23 Years Serving North Central Ohio Communities

Operation results in largest drug seizure in county

Knox County

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A joint law enforcement operation over the weekend has resulted in the largest drug seizure in Knox County's history, according to Sheriff David Barber.

Barber said the Central Ohio Drug Enforcement Task Force teamed up with the Knox County Sheriff's Office following a lengthy investigation of a marijuana distribution operation in Knox County.

Barber said his Tactical Response Unit and detectives and CODE TF members executed two search warrants simultaneously at two Utica area residences at 4:15 a.m. on Saturday.

Detectives seized 21 large bales of marijuana weighing nearly 500



Justice of 1356 Cullison Road, Utica, was arrested on second degree felony charges of trafficking in marijuana and possession of marijuana. Justice was transported to the Knox County Jail.

Two other men were arrested in connection with the drug operation following a traffic stop on Interstate 70 near the Licking/Franklin County line. The men were identified as 58-year-old Brad Williams of Oceanside, Calif., and 26-year-old Hector Manuel Aviles of Ganttee, Calif. Williams and Aviles have each been charged with second-degree felony counts of possession of marijuana and trafficking in marijuana.

"The outstanding cooperation from CODE TF has resulted in the largest drug seizure in this county's history said



pounds, dozens of firearms and a large amount of cash, along with a pickup truck and cargo trailer.

Barber said 52-year-old Jeffrey L.

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Operation Derailed nails 6 suspects

Seneca County

A major drug bust executed by the Seneca County Drug Task Force and six regional SWAT teams broke up a crack cocaine ring in Fostoria early Tuesday morning. Six people were arrested during simultaneous raids at dawn.

"Operation Derailed" took months to plan but only minutes to execute.

It all started at Fostoria's airport before dawn Tuesday morning. Nearly 100 law enforcement officers from 13 different departments in four neighboring counties met before caravanning to six different homes in the city that were about to be raided.

Fostoria Police Chief John McGuire said the planning for these raids was intense.

"This has been going on for three-and-a-half to four months," Chief McGuire said. "It started with saturated surveillance and then to individual drug buys from 13 suspects. There are ties to Toledo and a local business in town."

At around 5 a.m. six different SWAT teams executed search warrants simultaneously. Law enforcement teams arrested six suspects and seized thousands of pounds of crack cocaine, cocaine, marijuana, cocaine, drug para-

phernalia, criminal tools, and US currency used for drug money.

One person was charged with obstruction of official business. The search warrants were signed by Judge Jay Meyer of the Seneca County Common Pleas Probate Court and Judge David Woessner of the Wood County Common Pleas Probate Court.

"We've been tackling this problem since 2006 and it's a message if you continue to sell narcotics here in Fostoria and surrounding communities your days are numbered," Chief McGuire said.

SWAT teams conducted raids at 739 Cherry St., 610 Columbus Ave., 245 Bricker St., 215 East High St., 1067 Carrie Lane, and 1095 Carrie Lane. Apprehended were 46-year-old Richard May, 28-year-old Tyree Carpenter, 22-year-old Andrea Hernandez, 39-year-old Eric Coleman Sr., 25-year-old Tara O'Dell, 30-year-old Chester Pettaway, and 31-year-old Antione McCoy.

May was arrested and charged with obstruction of official business; Carpenter was charged with trafficking crack cocaine, possession of criminal tools, possession of cocaine and citations were issued for dog licensing violations; Hernandez is facing charges of

permitting drug use. The task force also charged Carpenter and Hernandez with child endangerment.

Coleman is facing charges of trafficking crack cocaine; O'Dell was charged with permitting drug use. Both are also facing citations were issued for dog licensing violations.

Pettaway, who had outstanding warrants for his arrest in Seneca and Wood counties, was charged with possession of crack cocaine. He is also facing child endangerment charges. McCoy was also charged with possession of crack cocaine and is facing child endangerment charges.

Additional charges could be handed down after further investigation into possible illegal gambling and dog fighting.

The Seneca County Drug Task Force hopes to make even more arrests in the next couple weeks and name the business that played a role in this ring.

Seneca County residents are encouraged to monitor their neighborhoods, Chief McGuire said. You are asked to contact the Fostoria Police Department at (419) 435-8573 or Anonymous Tip Line at (419) 435-4957.

Originally published by Fox Toledo News on November 3, 2009.

Largest seizure, from page 1

Barber, who estimated the street value of the seized marijuana to be approximately three-quarters of a million dollars.

Other agencies assisting in the investigation, arrests and seizures

were the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration, Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Knox County Prosecutor's Office.

The Knox County sheriff's and prosecutor's offices are active

members of the METRICH Enforcement Unit.

Originally published in the Mount Vernon News on December 23, 2009.

METRICH focus shifted by overdose cases

Richland County

Heroin and pharmaceutical drugs have become the focus of the METRICH Enforcement Unit because of overdoses.

In 2008, Richland County saw 15 accidental, fatal overdoses and two suicides. Of those cases, five involved heroin and four involved prescription drugs.

"It's clearly an objective because of what we've seen from diverted pharmaceuticals and heroin," METRICH Commander Lt. Dino Sgambellone said. "What drives us is a combination of input from the community and various trend data."

For the first time, METRICH has a full-time pharmaceutical investigator. A federal grant pays for the position handled by Darrin Remaley.

Mansfield police Chief Phil Messer told those at Wednesday's annual METRICH luncheon at the

Holiday Inn that the crime lab has received more samples of heroin than cocaine this year for the first time.

In 2000, the crime lab got only two or three samples of heroin. So far this year, it has received 199, compared to 168 samples of cocaine.

Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray has noticed the same trends. He was Wednesday's guest speaker.

"We are seeing a rise in heroin," Cordray said. "We are seeing a rise in fatalities from drug overdoses. It's becoming epidemic in some places."

Messer, who helped found METRICH 23 years ago, said the mission of the regional task force -- to improve the quality of life -- hasn't changed.

"We chose to focus on illegal narcotics and weapons in order to

promote safe neighborhoods," Messer said.

METRICH has grown to include 10 counties, representing 42 communities and 600,000 residents. The task force will receive \$368,000 in federal grants.

"Last year at this time, we were working hard to survive," Messer said. "There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Next year looks better for operating dollars."

Cordray said he admired the METRICH approach.

"What you exemplify is exactly what we try to preach, people working collaboratively together. It helps everybody do a better job," the attorney general said. "We're all aiming at the same goals."

Originally published in the News Journal on October 28, 2009

Search warrant concludes drug investigation

Marion County

Detectives from the MARMET/METRICH Enforcement Unit executed a search warrant at the address of 569 E. Church Street at 5:07 P.M. on October 8, 2009.

With the assistance of officers from the Marion Police Department, a traffic stop was conducted on a vehicle in the 370 block of E. Center Street. Allen Creagh, age 29 of 569 E. Church Street, was arrested in the vehicle as the result of a weeks long drug investigation conducted by the MAR-

MET/METRICH Enforcement Unit.

A search warrant was obtained independent of the traffic stop for Creagh's residence on E. Church Street, and was served shortly after 5 P.M.

MARMET/METRICH Detectives located heroin inside the residence, as well as paraphernalia indicative of drug trafficking. \$999 in cash was also seized from Creagh and another passenger in the traffic stop. Creagh was arrested on two counts of Traffick-

ing in Heroin, and one count of Possession of Heroin. This is the second felony heroin case presented on Creagh in the last two months.

"MARMET Detectives have worked multiple hours on this case stemming largely from TIPSLINE complaints", said Lt. B.J. Gruber, unit supervisor of the MARMET/METRICH Enforcement Unit. "This location is a short distance from our public library and we are pleased that as of today, this location will be closed for business", added Gruber.

Indoor marijuana growing operation shut down

Knox County

One person was arrested late Thursday night after an indoor marijuana growing operation was shut down near Gambier.

According to Knox County Sheriff David Barber, detectives and the Tactical Response Unit executed a search warrant at 11 p.m. Thursday at 8081 Big Run Road, discovering an indoor marijuana growing operation. Barber said three rooms in the house were modified for growing marijuana with high intensity lamps, fans and power supplies.

Kelly Bessett, 46, Mount

Vernon, was arrested inside the house at the time of the raid. She is being held in the Knox County Jail on a fourth-degree felony charge of illegal cultivation of marijuana.

Barber said detectives seized 66 growing plants and a quantity of dried marijuana as well as paraphernalia, chemicals and fertilizer. The street value of the seized marijuana was estimated at \$70,000.

The ongoing investigation is being handled by Detective David Light with assistance from detec-

tive Sgts. Roger Brown and Gary Rohler.

The Knox County Sheriff's Office, an active member of the METRICH Enforcement Unit, encourages anyone with information about marijuana cultivation or other drug activity in the county to contact the Detective Division at 393-6800 or the toll-free Crime Tip Line at (800) TIPUS-OFF (800-847-8763, ext. 333).

Originally published in the Mount Vernon News on November 2, 2009.

Cops arrest 'very dangerous man'

Huron County

One dangerous drug suspect. Two highly-trained tactical squads.

Seven members of the Norwalk Police Department and Huron County Sheriff's Office special response teams (SRTs) used a "no-knock search warrant" because of the "unpredictable temperament" of Edward E. Blair, Chief Dave Light said. He was on-hand along with five detectives when officers used the warrant about 11 p.m. Saturday.

Three people saw Blair with a handgun "all within the last month," Light said. However, the SRTs weren't able to find the weapon at the suspect's 32 Glover Ave. home Saturday.

During the incident, police seized prescription pills, assorted drug paraphernalia, items stolen from various area businesses and

a crossbow as evidence. Detective Sgt. Todd Temple said Blair is accused of threatening a Norwalk resident with the crossbow in September; he referred further questions to Light.

"Blair is such a paranoid individual he held the loaded crossbow at (the confidential informant's) face. He held it up because he was suspicious the guy was an informant," Light said.

Luckily, the informant was smart enough to back away from Blair and leave, the chief said, and "returned another day" to set up the drug buy.

Temple said Blair's arrest should have a "domino effect" on other drug dealers.

"I think a lot more people are going to fall as a result," the drug investigator said.

Blair currently is in custody at

the Huron County Jail on two counts of trafficking in drugs. Police expect to file additional charges. "I think we're going to have a total of five cases," Temple said. "Additional arrests are expected on other people."

The current investigation was overseen by METRICH, a 10-county drug task force.

"We started in May sometime," Temple said.

A couple years ago, Blair held an ice pick at an informant's throat, Light said.

"He's a very dangerous man. That's why we made the decision to use the SWAT teams," he added.

Originally published in the Norwalk Reflector on December 15, 2009.

Shelby: 285 pounds of 'broccoli' seized

Richland County

Police confiscated 285 pounds of marijuana Friday after a produce delivery truck at a Shelby business turned out to be unloading more than broccoli.

Police Chief Charlie Roub estimated the street value of the eight bails of marijuana at \$342,000.

"We got a call from the owner of a local business," Roub said Friday night. "They were unloading a truckload of produce.

One pallet in particular looked a little different. Part of it was kind of covered up. There were a number of green packages with clear wrapping."

Roub said employees took a closer look and discovered the bundles contained marijuana. He declined to name the business.

"They did everything right," he

said. "I don't want them associated with anything bad."

The delivery driver, Elias Cruz, 31, of Elsa Hidalgo, Texas, was arrested on a charge of possession of marijuana, a second-degree felony. He will be arraigned Monday.

"His explanation wasn't really suitable," Roub said.

A second man in the truck was not charged.

Roub credited the METRICH Enforcement Unit and the Ohio Highway Patrol for their help with the bust, which he called the biggest he can remember.

"To get that amount of drugs off the street is just fantastic," he said. "It's a big boost for us."

Roub said the marijuana would be destroyed when the case is resolved.



Authorities confiscated 285 pounds of marijuana Friday after a produce delivery truck at a Shelby business turned out to be unloading more than broccoli. Shelby police Chief Charlie Roub estimated the street value of the eight bails of mari-

Originally published in the News Journal on December 12, 2009.

Likely heroin OD leads to 3 arrests

Richland County

Crawford County sheriff's deputies and the METRICH Enforcement Unit recovered an unknown amount of drugs at a Tiro home Saturday night.

Officers are still trying to identify the drugs, but they suspect heroin.

Derek White, 21, 115 S. Main St., was charged with violating probation, the department reported. His roommate Alexis Probst, 18, was charged with possession of drugs.

Shelby Police Sgt. Dave Mack said police got a call around 8:30 p.m. Saturday about an unresponsive male in the parking lot of

MedCentral/Shelby Hospital.

Officers arrived at the hospital to find individuals attempting to remove Zachary Lynch, 26, from his vehicle. Mack said Lynch is a Crestline resident, but was moving back to Shelby.

"We found some evidence that drugs were involved and through interviews, we traced the case back to Crawford County," Mack said.

Lynch was transferred to MedCentral/Mansfield Hospital and was listed Sunday night in critical condition.

"We've had problems with heroin overdoses for years," Mack

said. "One balloon in Shelby is too much. We don't have the toxicology report on (Lynch) yet, so I can't say for sure that's what this was, but that's what evidence is pointing to."

Mack said Amanda Randolph, 23, 206 Patterson St., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and drug abuse instruments.

"We are going to be aggressively following up on this," he said. "This will be a joint investigation between Crawford County, METRICH and our department."

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METRICH Drug Unit ends 12 month drug operation

Seneca County

On Monday, December 21, 2009, the Seneca County Drug Task Force METRICH Enforcement Unit, consisting of the Fostoria Police Department, Tiffin Police Department, Seneca County Sheriff's Office, the Seneca County Prosecutor's Office, along with additional Officers from the Fostoria Police Department, Seneca County Sheriff's Office and Tiffin Police Department, executed arrest warrants on numerous drug traffickers throughout Seneca County, Ohio.

The Seneca County Drug Task Force METRICH Enforcement Unit had concluded a twelve month drug investigation resulting with the Seneca County Grand Jury issuing multiple count drug trafficking and drug possession indictments on approximately seventeen suspects throughout Seneca County, Ohio. Officers and agents from various Law Enforcement Agencies spent Monday tracking down some of the drug suspects throughout Seneca County.

Eleven of the seventeen sus-

pects were apprehended and are presently incarcerated at the Seneca and Wood County Jails waiting further prosecution. The investigation involved the sales of heroin, marijuana, cocaine, Ecstasy and prescription medication throughout Seneca County, Ohio. Several of the indictments also included specifications of some of the sales being conducted within 100 feet of juveniles and in the vicinity of area schools.

"This is the conclusion of just one of several open investigations that our unit is presently working on and there are still several suspects who still remain at large.", Det. Matt D. Armstrong, Fostoria Police Department/Seneca County Drug Task Force said.

"Our county has been seeing an increase in pharmaceutical and heroin related deaths amongst our younger population, this is the first stages of an ongoing investigation addressing some of the persons responsible for distributing drugs, including prescription drugs, throughout our county. Our unit will continue with these in-

vestigations to also address the persons involved in irresponsibly dispensing prescription drugs in our community, as well.", Det. Charles W. Boyer, Unit Coordinator said.

Arrested were Robert Ward, Robert Bauman, Amy Blackford, Jessica Dyer, Claude Reed, Richard Soals, Brenda Baxter, Marquis Smith, Donna Jones, Pete Haslinger and David Stults.

"This is just a small portion of what we have been seeing throughout the county involving prescription drug abuse and other related drugs. It's simple, you sell your prescription drugs, you go to jail, period.", Det. Donald R. Joseph, Seneca County Sheriff's Office/Seneca County Drug Task Force – METRICH stated.

"I would like to commend our local drug unit's efforts who were all instrumental in this investigation and it's great to continue to see the accomplishments resulting from the relationship between the Task Force Agents and local Law Enforcement", Captain Bill Echelberry (Seneca County Sheriff's Office) said.

Task force executes search warrants and makes arrests

Marion County

The MARMET Drug Task Force conducted an investigation that led to a series of arrests and a search warrant at 499 Delaware Avenue which was executed by MARMET detectives, along with detectives from the Marion County Sheriff's Office and the Marion Police Department. Crack cocaine was located during the search.

Arrested were: Cara Hoffman; three counts trafficking in crack, one count possession of crack with a specification of drug trafficking while a child was present, Raymond McDuffie; one count parole violation, Kaliq Pyles; Cleveland, Ohio, three counts of trafficking in crack, with a specification of drug trafficking while a child was present, and Avery

Johnson; 230 Wallace Street, three counts of trafficking in crack..

In a separate investigation, a search warrant was executed at 201 East George Street.

Arrested were: Todd Smith; two counts of trafficking in heroin and Cassandra Miniard; two counts of trafficking in heroin.

More enforcement is one approach

Marion County

Enforcement is one way to battle the opiate epidemic in Ohio, from arrests to convictions to prison time.

The MARMET Drug Task Force has investigated more cases of opiate abuse than ever before. And unlike other drug problems, which can be traced to dealers from out of town such as Chicago and Detroit, heroin addicts and dealers make trips to Columbus on a daily basis to feed their habits.

It's everywhere.

Having the task force and the crime tips line, however, aids officers in curbing the problem when and where they can.

"It's a scary thing to think today where we would be if we didn't have our task force," supervisor Lt. B.J. Gruber of the police department said.

He and Maj. Aaron Corwin of the sheriff's office run the unit together.

Both said they've seen heroin use expand significantly in the past two years. To battle the drug problem through the community, they're working to step up enforcement efforts such as a roundup of more than 20 drug dealers in late July, preceded by a joint effort of the police department, sheriff's office and Ohio State Highway Patrol to target problem areas in the city, Operation Make Some Noise.

In the weeks following those efforts, dealers packed it up and moved, going back to other cities if they came from out of town, Gruber said.

"It's not worth doing business

here," he said. "This is not a good place to sell your drugs."

MARMET officers always are on call, and current work schedules put drug detectives on the streets for about 15 hours of every day, he said.

While increased enforcement efforts contribute to the fight against drugs, for every dealer taken off the streets, Gruber said it feels like five more move in.

To keep the problem from ever developing, officers say parents should talk to their kids.

"I don't want my kids around this," Corwin said.

Warning them about things like Robotripping, a stunt where someone chugs a bottle of cough syrup so they'll hallucinate, is as important as warning them about illegal drugs, Gruber said.

Officers also hear stories about teens at parties tossing bottles of prescription pills and others into a bowl and directing everyone to take a handful. Detering the problem starts at home, they said - don't wait until the problem is there and there isn't any way to fight it except by calling police.

Most of the tips on drugs the task force hears are from family members of suspects, Corwin said.

"They don't want to get them in trouble, but if that's what it takes to get them help, then they call," he said.

Marion County Common Pleas Court Judge Robert Davidson said there are more than 700 offenders on probation at any given time and probably two-thirds of them have committed drug-



MARMET supervisor Maj. Aaron Corwin, of the Marion County Sheriff's Office, holds ecstasy that was confiscated and held as evidence.

related crimes.

What he and Judge William Finnegan do every day is host a drug court, but to gain resources for a specialized docket that would handle such offenses would be impossible. Several more judges would be needed as well as probation officers to have the intensive supervision required for a drug court.

However, for years he has been meeting with some offenders outside of court hearings on a regular basis to help deter drug-related problems. With a tight county budget, that's all that's possible for now.

Marion Municipal Court will be hosting a treatment court for drug and OVI offenders beginning in January.

Originally published in the Marion Star on December 14, 2009.

23 Years Serving North Central Ohio Communities



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METRICH (Metro-Richland County) Enforcement Unit is a ten county law enforcement task force created to address multi-jurisdictional violators of Ohio's drug, weapons, and organized crime statutes. The project operates with a basic "Community Policing Philosophy" using a "Weed and Seed Strategy" from ten "de-centralized" offices.

Participating agencies: Ashland, Crawford, Hancock, Huron, Knox, Marion, Morrow, Richland, Seneca, Wyandot County Sheriff's Offices and Prosecutors Offices; Ashland, Loudonville, Bucyrus, Crestline, Galion, Findlay, Bellevue, Greenwich, Monroeville, New London, Norwalk, Plymouth, Wakeman, Willard, Mt. Vernon, Marion, Mt. Gilead, Lexington, Mansfield, Ontario, Shelby, Fostoria, Tiffin, Carey, Upper Sandusky Police Departments; Ohio State Highway Patrol; Ohio Department of Public Safety; BCI&I, Ohio State Board of Pharmacy; U.S Department of Housing & Urban Development; FBI; ATF; DEA; IRS.

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