



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

A SUSPECT is handcuffed and searched during a crackdown on street-level drug dealers conducted by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department narcotics squad in the Phoenix and Navassa areas Thursday night.

'ONE OF MANY TO COME'

Narcotics Squad Makes 55 Arrests In Three Day Drug Crackdown

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department narcotics squad launched a three-pronged crackdown on illegal drug use and trafficking during the past two weeks, resulting in the arrests of 55 people on charges involving cocaine, marijuana, alcohol and traffic offenses.

Last Tuesday (March 22), drug officers Billy Hughes, Kevin Holden, Gary Shay and drug squad supervisor Lt. David Crocker set up a surveillance and apprehension operation in north end of the county aimed at arresting drug users after they were observed purchasing illegal drugs.

Six people were charged with 13 felonies Tuesday night, said Crocker, who coordinated the three operations.

In a major effort Thursday night, the drug squad targeted street dealers in the Phoenix and Navassa communities outside Leland. Operating in known drug-trafficking areas, officers arranged to purchase "rocks" of crack cocaine from dealers who were then transported to a secure area and arrested.

Five men were apprehended that night for alleged possession of controlled substances with the intent to sell, along with numerous other charges, Crocker said. About \$2,000 worth of crack cocaine, a small quantity of marijuana and several crack pipes were confiscated.

Also participating in the operation Thursday were State Bureau of Investigation Agent Teresa West, Brunswick detectives Charlie Miller, Gene Caison, John Ingram, Steve Mason and Ken Messer, auxiliary deputies Rick Shupe, Mike Allen and Bill Miller, Ocean Isle Beach Police Officer Dan Hunter and "Colonel," the sheriff's department drug-sniffing dog.

In the third effort on Friday, the drug squad conducted investigative traffic stops on U.S. 17 in the

Leland area with assistance from county ABC Officer Mike Speck, N.C. Highway Patrolman Roy Murray and N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement officer Mark Senter.

Four people were arrested on misdemeanor drug charges Friday. Seven were charged with ABC violations and about 30 were issued traffic citations for reckless driving, speeding, seat belt violations, driving without a license and other offenses, Crocker said.

"I'm really proud of these guys. They executed our plans well and adapted without a hitch as situations changed," Crocker said.

He declined to attach a catchy name to the latest crackdown and expressed appreciation for the help of citizens who phoned in tips on drug activities in their neighborhoods.

"I'm not giving this operation a name, because I consider it just one of many to come," Crocker said. "I would continue to encourage people to keep calling us. As long as the calls keep coming in, we'll keep kicking."

Among those arrested on drug charges during the three-day effort were:

■ Clarence Lewis Jr., 43, of Cedar Hill Road, Leland, on one charge each of possession with the intent to sell and deliver cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Sylvester Lorenza Hooper, 28, of Dogwood Road, Leland, on a charge of possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Walter Samuel Williams II, 40, of Main Street, Navassa, on one count each of felonious possession of a controlled substance with intent to sell and deliver and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Richard Darnell Davis, 40, of Phoenix, on one count each of possession with intent to sell and deliver a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ George Lewis Hooper, 40, of Dogwood Drive, Leland, on one count each of possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and resisting arrest.

■ Trevor Dewayne Patrick, 20, of Village Road, Leland, on one count each of cocaine possession, maintaining a vehicle to keep a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Alice West Andrews, 30, of Wayne Street, Leland, on two counts of possession of a controlled substance.

■ Georgette Marie Kesselman, 28, of Carolina Beach on one count each of possessing cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Leonard Ray White, 38, of Route 4, Leland, on one count each of possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of cocaine.

■ Lori Christine Spicer, 24, of Wilmington, on one count each of possessing cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Reginald Royce Ballard, 38, of Ballard's Mobile Home Park, Phoenix, on one count each of possessing cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Ronald Henry Cox, 42, of Wingate on a charge of possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Brandon Elliott Coleman, 20, of Violet Street, Supply, on one count each of misdemeanor marijuana possession and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Byron Scott Muniz, 26, of Auden Street, Shallotte, on one count each of misdemeanor possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

■ Donna Baughman, 40, of Newport News, Va., on one count each of misdemeanor possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

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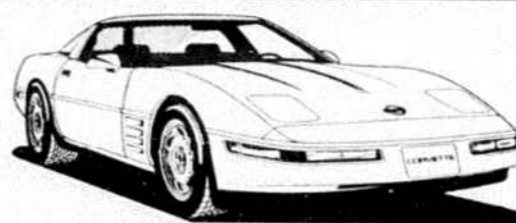
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