

Busted

Task force snares 11 people for drugs

Eleven people were arrested in Seneca County Friday as part of a roundup targeting heroin, prescription drugs and cocaine.

Derek DeVine, Seneca County Prosecutor, said Friday morning 16 people had been indicted Wednesday by a Seneca County grand jury and law enforcement was to actively seek them throughout the day Friday.

By Friday evening, 11 of the 16 had been arrested, said Chuck Boyer, unit coordinator of the Seneca County Drug Task Force - METRICH Enforcement Unit.

DeVine said ongoing investigations on behalf of METRICH led to the indictments, which included a total of 24 counts of trafficking in heroin, six counts of trafficking in cocaine, one count of retaliation and one count of theft of prescription drugs.

"Heroin abuse is the biggest problem we have in law enforcement at this point in time," DeVine said Friday morning at a press conference. "A significant portion of cases are people abusing heroin or involved somehow in the heroin trade."

DeVine said, because heroin is so addictive, cheap and easy to obtain, it has been affecting people of all socio-economic classes. Many of those addicted to heroin start with prescription pill abuse and move on to heroin as a cheaper alternative, DeVine said.

"I've been prosecutor for five years and it shocks me the number of people who don't appreciate the toxicity of prescription pain pill abuse which then leads to heroin," he said. "Heroin is something that just blows people away. It ruins their lives. These people are completely devastated and dying."

DeVine said 65-75 percent of the cases his office prosecutes are drug-related, and law enforcement is up against the wall when it comes to finding a solution. By stopping the sale of heroin through Friday's arrests, they hope to stop the plague.

He said education also is key in the battle.

"We want to stop people bringing the drug in," he said.

Seneca County Sheriff Bill Eckelberry said Friday the county has seen an increase in the abuse and trafficking of heroin, and law enforcement has been aggressive in battling it.

"It's devastating to families and we have to do everything we can to battle it," he said.

The city of Tiffin also has been fighting the drug, Chief Fred Stevens of the Tiffin Police Department said.

Stevens said the whole country has been seeing a trend in heroin abuse, and by arresting those who sell it, law enforcement hopes to cut down on other crimes, such as thefts and burglaries.

Pat Brooks, a captain at the Fostoria Police Department, said Fostoria, like other local agencies, have been battling heroin. He said Suboxone, a prescription drug used to treat opioid dependence, also is another drug in which people are becoming addicted.

"We're seeing Suboxone and heroin much more than cocaine and crack cocaine," Brooks said.

So far in Seneca County, METRICH has had 41 drug-related cases, and most of them have been heroin related, Boyer said.

"That's really high, you're talking about almost one a day," Stevens said.

Boyer said heroin overdoses also are becoming more and more prevalent, and law enforcement hopes to begin better tracing overdoses and deaths.

Boyer said Friday night following the 11 arrests that the day had been a success.

"The ones that need help need to get it, and the ones that need to be incarcerated need to be incarcerated," Boyer said.

Those arrested Friday included :

Jillian Murphy, 22, of Tiffin, trafficking in heroin; Jennifer Murphy, 24, of Tiffin, two counts of trafficking in heroin; Cory Cook, 25, of Tiffin, retaliation; Bobby Williams, 33, of Tiffin, two counts of trafficking in heroin and one count of complicity to trafficking in heroin; Joshua Carter, 24, two counts of trafficking in heroin; Chasidy Ryon, 29, of Tiffin, two counts of trafficking in heroin; Tessa Lundy, 25, of Tiffin, two counts of trafficking in cocaine; Sarah Carpenter, 34, of Tiffin, theft of prescription drugs; Cody Hall, 27, of Tiffin, trafficking in heroin; Angela Kopp, 37, of Tiffin, trafficking in crack cocaine; Jiana Masella, 19, of Tiffin, two counts of trafficking in heroin.

Originally published in the Tiffin Advertiser Tribune on February 22, 2014.