

## **Four Marion-area trafficking suspects arrested in Operation 'Take A Number'**

Neighborhood complaints sparked a drug bust Friday at four suspected drug houses.

The MARMET Drug Task Force's latest operation, codenamed "Take A Number," aimed to hit alleged drug dealers in the area, said Lt. Chris Adkins with the Marion Police Department.

"It's a continual problem, and we're not going to stop," he said.

Police Chief Bill Collins said law enforcement wanted to "make a statement" for neighbors who "are tired of the drugs and the traffic and the stuff that comes along with it right next door to them."

"There was a lady crying on Ballentine (Avenue) saying thank you," he said. "(This operation) is to make an impact for the neighborhoods."

At least 50 officers assisted in arresting four suspected mid-level drug dealers, all Marion residents, just after sunrise.

After police arrested 35-year-old Deon T. Gale out of his home, 539 Jefferson St., Adkins said they found 15 grams of powder cocaine, 5 grams of crack cocaine, 89 Oxycodone pills and \$400.

Adkins said neighbors were thanking police outside when they hit the home and took Gale away on drug trafficking charges.

Allen C. Creagh, 33, was taken to the hospital following his arrest for drug trafficking at 464 Ballentine Ave. Adkins said Creagh "pulled a bag of white powder out of his (backside) and threw it into his mouth and swallowed it."

While Creagh detoured at the hospital on his way to prison to get his stomach pumped, Adkins said officers found heroin at the suspect's home.

Officers also arrested Carl M. Prather, 35, at the Ballentine Avenue house on charges of permitting drug abuse and disorderly conduct.

At a home at 100 Arlington Ave., near North Main Street, 29-year-old Shalon L. Ford also was found, along with \$1,000 in suspected drug money, and arrested on charges of drug trafficking.

Two dogs were rescued from the home, said Maj. Jeff Cline. He said a third was killed when it tried to attack a deputy entering the home.

While deputies were searching the home, a male driver pulled into the driveway. When he spotted law enforcement, he backed out and took off down Main Street. One deputy checked the license plate on the vehicle and no warrant came up.

Nothing was found at 513 Avondale Ave., the final location investigated in the sweep.

Collins said the operation targeted “pretty decent-sized dealers.”

“They’re not your typical traffic users,” Adkins said. “These are guys who are doing this specifically to make money.”

All four suspects who were arrested had previous criminal history in Marion. Creagh was found selling heroin while out on bond for the same crime in 2009. Ford was charged with trafficking cocaine in 2004.

The MARMET Drug Task Force, which includes members of the Marion Police Department and the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, was aided by the Allied Special Operation Response Team out of Richland County and the Delaware Area Tactical Unit. The drug task force anticipated the suspects would be armed, which led to the increase in enforcement.

Officers were briefed just before dawn and began to move on houses at daybreak. They converged simultaneously on the four residences around 7 a.m.

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