

## COPS SAY DRUG DEN THRIVING NEAR U-M

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Author: MARYANNE GEORGE FREE PRESS ANN ARBOR BUREAU

From the outside, the white stucco house on Packard Street in Ann Arbor looks like many student apartment houses near the University of Michigan campus, a little shabby with peeling paint and sparse shrubbery.

But inside the house, located less than three blocks from two of **U-M**'s biggest dorms, Ann Arbor police **say** a Detroit **drug** crew has set up a sophisticated heroin and crack operation targeting students. After years of frustration, police and city officials have launched a sweeping effort to shut down the house and the dealers.

Police and **drug** counselors **say** heroin is making a comeback in Washtenaw County and elsewhere in the state. The new wave of heroin is more potent, and some young addicts prefer to snort it rather than inject it because it leaves no marks, they **say**.

In 10 years, police have responded to 227 calls to the Packard house for assaults, burglaries, sexual assaults and a barricaded gunman, according to police records. Police have also executed at least three **drug**-related search warrants and arrested 40 people on **drug** charges. The city is now taking the unusual step of taking the landlord to court in a bid to shut down the house.

The house also serves as a clearinghouse for stolen property including credit cards, guns, students' computers and fresh meat, which are all bartered for **drugs**, police **say**.

The two 20-something bosses of the Detroit crew hang out with students at parties near campus trying to develop customers, and one of them was supplying crack to a girl in a sorority, according to Ann Arbor Police Sgt. Lyle Sartori. The leader of the investigation, he is a member of the Livingston and Washtenaw Narcotics Enforcement Team (LAWNET).

One of the alleged bosses, Brazel Gardenhire, 25, has been charged with multiple **drug** felonies. Police are also seeking charges against him in connection with the March 14 death of a 19-year-old woman from a heroin and cocaine overdose. Gardenhire was allegedly with the woman, Jennifer Andrews, when she overdosed in the basement of a house on Ann Arbor's west side.

Gardenhire could not be reached for comment.

"Gardenhire tells his workers to cultivate **U-M** students for heroin," Sartori said. "He **says** ' **U-M** students have a lot of money and they're open-minded and want to experiment with **drugs** .' That sent me over the edge. I heard this about the same time as the March 14 overdose."

Although the house has been a long-standing headache for police, problems escalated about a year ago when Gardenhire and his crew set up an Ann Arbor operation based in one of the six apartments in the house, Sartori said.

"There are the two main bosses, three workers from Detroit, four local runners and six local associates who provide transportation and or residences to work out of," Sartori said of the Detroit crew, adding that he's impressed by how well the crew is organized.

Since August, LAWNET officers have executed two search warrants at the Packard house and conducted a citywide **drug** sweep, resulting in the arrest of Gardenhire, the other crew boss and five crew members, Sartori said. He declined to name the other suspects until charges are filed.

LAWNET recovered 70 grams of a substance suspected to be cocaine during the sweep after observing a **drug** deal. A third independent crew boss is in the Wayne County Jail on outstanding felony warrants, he said.

Gardenhire is being held in the Washtenaw County Jail in lieu of \$50,000 bond. He has been charged with two counts of delivery of a controlled substance and one count of possession with intent to deliver cocaine. He faces a maximum of 20 years in jail if he is convicted. A trial is set for Oct. 4.

Police are seeking multiple felony charges against people associated with the house, including 21 delivery of cocaine charges; 13 conspiracy to deliver cocaine charges; three possession of cocaine with intent to deliver charges, and three possession with intent to deliver within 1,000 feet of a school zone charges, which carry penalties two to three times the normal 20-year maximum sentence. They are also pursuing 13 federal racketeering charges in the case, Sartori said.

Last month, the Ann Arbor City Attorney's office filed a public nuisance suit against the owner of the house, Habtemariam Tedla. City officials are trying to force Tedla to rid the house of **drug** dealers and housing code violations or have a court-appointed receiver take charge to clean it up, according to the suit.

In addition to the **drug** operations, city officials have documented apartments in the house with no heat, broken toilets and leaking ceilings dating to 1989, according to the suit. Ann Arbor Police have also found suspects in robberies hiding in the house and observed a tenant pointing a rifle into traffic from the porch.

Sartori said filing the nuisance suit and pursuing federal racketeering charges, in addition to the **drug** charges, is the result of years of frustration with conventional law enforcement efforts.

Tedla has been sent letters warning that his property could be seized after each of the three LAWNET raids. Sartori also gave him a verbal warning during a raid in August.

"These tactics are not used off the bat," he said. "Normally you go to a place, hit the door, send the letter to the landlord telling them they can be held liable and the landlord **says** , 'What can I do?' People have been beaten and cars have been stolen there for years and there was no end in sight. That's what spurred us to do what we did."

Tedla, who is out of the country visiting relatives, could not be reached for comment. He has not seen the lawsuit, said his attorney, David Goldstein, who added that his client has been trying to evict people for years but his efforts have been frustrated by the city.

"He's been trying to evict them because they are not paying rent or because they have no business being there," Goldstein said.

Nearby dorms a concern

**U-M** officials **say** they support police efforts to clean up the house. Alan Levy, **U-M** director of housing public affairs, said the university has a zero-tolerance policy toward **drug** use in the dorms. Student surveys show less than 1 percent of students **say** they use heroin or cocaine.

Levy said he was not aware of a specific connection between activities at the Packard house and **U-M** dorms. Two of the university's largest, South Quad, which houses about 1,250 students and West Quad, home to 1,100, are less than three blocks from the house.

Several neighbors declined to comment on the house. A manager of an apartment building next door said her tenants reported no problems, but asked that her name not be used.

Rich Magner owner of Krazy Jim's Blimpyburger, a campus diner on Division Street about two blocks from the house, said he has called police several times about **drug** deals outside his restaurant.

"I saw people I suspected were crackheads going back and forth from the house," he said. "No one wants that in their neighborhood."

Death's specter grows

Ann Arbor Detective Bill Stanford never knew Jennifer Andrews during her short, troubled life. But it is his job to investigate Gardenhire's alleged role in her death.

Andrews had lived in foster care in her native Alaska and been adopted as a teenager, Stanford said. She moved to Adrian and had been studying to be a paramedic. But recently Andrews had been living at a treatment center for women addicts on South State Street, about five blocks from the Packard house, until shortly before her March 14 overdose.

"We believe her death is directly related to Gardenhire's illegal narcotics business," Stanford said. "She never caught a break. She was a young girl who didn't deserve to die the way she died. She was trying to do well."

Glynis Anderson ran the **drug** rehabilitation center where Andrews had been staying. She declined to comment on Andrews, citing client confidentiality policies. But Anderson is alarmed by the resurgence of heroin. Five clients or former clients have overdosed in the last six months, she said.

"Heroin is on the rise in the last four years all over, not just in Washtenaw County," Anderson said. "But prevention programs are targeting lower classes and it's the middle-class kids who are buying and selling it.

"That house is getting attention because it's next to **U-M**," Anderson said, referring to the Packard house. "But there are plenty of other **drug** houses in Washtenaw County not getting attention. If we're going to clean it up, we need to clean it up all over."

Contact MARYANNE GEORGE at 734-665-5600 or [mageorge@freepress.com](mailto:mageorge@freepress.com)

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Caption: Photo REGINA H. BOONE/Detroit Free Press

A jogger runs by an ordinary-looking rooming house in Ann Arbor on Friday. Police **say** it's the site of a heroin and crack operation that's targeting students. City officials have filed suit to shut it down.

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