

Girl's death led to end of drug dealing ring - Slaying sparked renewed effort on part of prosecutor

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DETROIT -- Nearly a year after the gunshot slaying **of** a 3-year-old girl, a task force **of** local and federal authorities has largely dismantled a long-running **drug dealing** network responsible for her **death** , officials said Monday.

William DeShun Johnson's conviction last week for second-degree murder in a another slaying capped the task force's 10-month effort, which has set an example for more ambitious anticrime operations, said Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Duggan.

Johnson, 22, was a member **of** the "Johnson family" operation that has sold **drugs** along Wabash for about 20 years, police said. Two **of** its members mistakenly killed Destinee Thomas in a spray **of** bullets fired into her home in the 5600 block **of** Woodrow last March 23. Authorities said they had targeted Eddie Smith, a man they believed **to** be encroaching on their **drug** turf.

That killing, along with other children's slayings, prompted authorities **to** crack down on gun violence in Detroit.

Project Destinee, as it is called, has netted nine arrests, seven convictions and 25 illegal firearms so far. The task force matched the investigative resources **of** the FBI, Bureau **of** Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Internal Revenue Service with local police. At the same time, prosecutors in Wayne County and the U.S. Attorney's Office conferred **to** find the strongest state or federal criminal charges for those arrested.

"We learned not **to** bust people with small amounts **of** **drugs** and no guns who will get no prison time," Duggan said. Instead, "we have done significant damage **to** the Johnson organization."

The law enforcement strategy has evolved along the way. For example, Janarvus Andrew Miller, 26, received a year **of** probation when he pleaded guilty in April **to** a reduced charge **of** attempted possession **of** 25 grams **of** **drugs** .

Two months later, in a similar case involving a relatively small amount **of** cocaine, authorities realized Carlos Rondell Brantley, 32, was within 1,000 feet **of** a school while selling **drugs** . That is a more serious crime and Brantley, who also had a **drug dealing** conviction in 1992, is now serving two **to** 40 years in prison for it.

Another man, William Eads, 19, was charged in July with similarly **dealing** heroin within a school zone. He twice skipped court and was a fugitive for about seven weeks on the charge. He is now being held without bond until his trial next month.

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