

PA. COCAINE BUST SHOWS DETROIT KIDS AS SELLERS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Monday, March 13, 2006

Author: AMBER HUNT and BEN SCHMITT, FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Three years ago, drug dealers migrated from **Detroit** to New Castle, Pa., with bags of powder **cocaine** in hand.

The goal? To take over the crack **cocaine** market. And they succeeded, law enforcement officials say - in part because they used **Detroit** youths to sell the drugs.

The dealers, who went by street names such as Moses and Tone, employed as many as 20 workers from **Detroit** - some as young as 14 - to peddle.

After a few weeks, the dealers sent the teenagers back to **Detroit** and brought in a new crop in an effort to throw off police in the western **Pennsylvania** town.

"We would see new faces," New Castle Police Chief Thomas Sansone said after an investigation resulted in drug charges against 18 Detroiters, including one juvenile, last month. "They'd all give us fake names."

Using juveniles to sell drugs is nothing new, authorities acknowledge. In **Detroit**, Young Boys Incorporated, or YBI, used school-age children to sell drugs in the 1970s and '80s.

"But the specific use of juveniles rotating from **Detroit** to New Castle was something much more organized than we've seen with others," said Nils Frederiksen, spokesman for the **Pennsylvania** Attorney General's Office.

Two **Detroit**-based drug rings supplied New Castle's dealers, sometimes cooperating in selling as much as \$2 million in crack since 2003, authorities said.

But their empires came crashing down when 70 New Castle and **Pennsylvania** officers closed an investigation and issued charges against 28 people.

Five of the 18 Detroiters are in custody - including one of the reputed leaders, 39-year-old James (O-Z) Brooks - while the others are still at large. **Pennsylvania** authorities said they think the suspects may have fled back to **Detroit**.

Several of those facing warrants have criminal records in Michigan, according to the state Department of Corrections. Brooks, 32-year-old Shantez Johnson and 36-year-old Darian Hall have served time for dealing **cocaine**; David Randall, 20, and Andrew Davis, 18, have been convicted of breaking and entering.

Frenzado Snow, 28, who authorities say goes by the street name Kill, was convicted of negligent homicide in 1997.

Snow, Randall, Hall and Davis are still at large. Johnson is in custody.

In addition to drug charges, everyone charged faces two counts of participating in a corrupt organization and one count of criminal conspiracy.

The name of the juvenile charged is not being released. Police said other juveniles couldn't be located or identified to face charges.

New Castle, across the border from Youngstown, Ohio, was an easy target, officials say: The old mill town with 28,000 residents has been hurting for jobs for years. Housing prices have suffered and unemployment is rampant, residents say.

"All our big steelworks are gone," said Josephine McFarland, who has lived on North Walnut Street for more than 50 years. Her home is down the street from a rental house police say was used to sell crack.

Another home nicknamed the Clubhouse, at 922 Carson St., was the **Detroit** operation's first base, according to a **Pennsylvania** grand jury investigation. The gang would cook into crack the **cocaine** it brought from **Detroit** and sell the rocks.

Brooks allegedly ran the operation, keeping all of the home's windows and all but one of its doors nailed shut.

After that house burned down, other New Castle homes were transformed into crack houses - including the one near McFarland.

"There were a lot of cars coming and going there," she said last week. "But we didn't realize it was as much as it was."

Police raided that house on the corner, at 102 N. Walnut, in January and confiscated 700 grams of powder **cocaine** and \$4,000 from the ceiling above the kitchen and the attic.

Police also found a handgun, a digital scale, baking soda and empty plastic bags - items used in the preparation of crack.

"We've had a neighborhood watch in this area," McFarland said. "We're trying to keep it drug free right in our little spot. We're trying, but it's not working too good."

Detroit dealers turned a tidy profit by selling typically \$5 rocks for up to \$20, authorities said. And they strong-armed themselves into power, threatening buyers who bought crack from non-Detroiters.

Detroit -based dealers have been accused of running similar operations in other small towns.

Police in Huntington, W.Va., are investigating Detroiters after four teenagers were killed last year in what officials described **as** drug-related shootings.

In New Castle, the dealers used juveniles to help sell the drugs because it's tougher to track down minors, Sansone said.

The **kids** and their families back in **Detroit** likely were paid hundreds of dollars **a** week for their work.

Juveniles are "expendable and fearless," Sansone said. "That's nothing new to us."

Juveniles also face less time in custody when they're caught.

Detroit Police Lt. James Tolbert said **kids** aren't used **as** often to sell drugs in **Detroit as** they were in the YBI days. Juveniles arrested with narcotics nowadays are sent straight to youth homes, he said.

But he said he remembers when gang leaders would prey on low-income families, offering them money, nice clothes and trendy shoes to draw them into the organization.

"Still, there are inherent issues when dealing with juveniles all the time," Tolbert said. "Are they going to be loyal? Will they get lonely and call home? You don't want to put them in an unfamiliar surrounding unless you can totally brainwash them.

"You can have **a** very dedicated individual, but that's one heck of **a** risk."

(SIDEBAR)

18 DETROITERS CHARGED

*Lamarol Abram, 28, also known **as** Tone. Still at large.

*James Brooks, 39, also known **as** O-Z, Oz or Moses. In custody.

*Andrew Davis, 18, also known **as** Twin. At large.

*Lionell Edwards, 20, also known **as** Spanky. At large.

Marcos Ferreira, 18, also known **as** Loco. At large.

*Darian Hall, 36, also known **as** D-Frame. At large.

*Maurice Hubbard, 20, also known **as** Eli. At large.

*Shantez Johnson, 32, also known as Stretch. In custody.

*John McCurdy, 35, also known as Isiah. In custody.

*Tytee Mitchell, 28, also known as T-Rod. In custody.

*Anthony Neal, 34, also known as Panama. In custody.

*Jasper Neal, 34, also known as Izzo. At large.

*Randy Oates, 20, also known as Black. At large.

*David Randall, 20, also known as Ace. At large.

*Frenzado Snow, 28, also known as Kill. At large.

*Bennie Tabb, 20, also known as Money. At large.

*Larry Tabb, 34, also known as Boo. At large.

*An unidentified juvenile also faces charges.

Contact AMBER HUNT at 313-222-2708 or alhunt@freepress.com. Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-223-4296 or bcschmitt@freepress.com.

ILLUSTRATION: Map **Detroit** Free Press;Photo

CAPTION:

Andrew Davis

Lamarol Abram

Bennie Tabb

Frenzado Snow

David Randall

Randy Oates

Jasper Neal

Maurice Hubbard

Larry Tabb

Darian Hall

Marcos Ferreira

CAPTIONWRITER: Lionell Edwards

MEMO: SIDEBAR ATTACHED

DISCLAIMER: THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE
PRINTED ARTICLE

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: juvenile; narcotics; sale; major story; 2006; crime; Detroit ;Midwest; Pennsylvania
; drug ring; Detroit ; connection; namelist

Record Number: dfp0000242625

Copyright (c) Detroit Free Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett
Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.