

MOM, SON TROUBLED AREA'S LATEST CASUALTIES

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Author: SUZETTE HACKNEY Free Press Staff Writer

April Jenkins, a 27-year-old Detroit mother of five, was awakened early Wednesday morning by the sound of something crashing into the back of her house. She woke her husband and went downstairs to check on her sleeping children.

There, she was met by a bullet that struck her in the head and killed her. Her son, 6-year-old **Dalante Jenkins**, who also had stirred from the noise, was shot in the chest. He was taken from the house in the 20000 block of Omira, on the city's northeast side, to Henry Ford Hospital, where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

Now police are trying to figure out who killed them and what the motive was. Police are also trying to string together a series of crimes that have plagued the neighborhood and left five people slain since November.

"This crime was horrendous," said Inspector William Rice, Detroit Police homicide chief. "There's no motive that would justify the end result of this crime."

Police believe **Jenkins** and her son may have opened the door to investigate the noise and were shot around 2:15 a.m. Wednesday. Four other children -- Devon Jackson, 10; Donavon Jackson, 9; Delano Jackson, 7, and Destiny **Jenkins**, 5 -- were not harmed. The family had just moved into the house -- known as a popular drug den because of the last renters -- last week.

Rice and Chief Benny Napoleon said the killings are drug-related, but the connection is not yet clear. Possible scenarios could include a mistaken identity.

"The adult could have been an intended victim," Napoleon said. "As for the child, he may have just been in a bad place at the wrong time."

One thing is clear: The neighborhood and the house have had their share of crime. Police found more than 50 bullet holes on the home's exterior.

"This house has been an old, established drug house and subject to numerous other gun battles," Rice said. "I can't say which holes came from this incident."

Police also know that the noise **Jenkins** heard was that of a Molotov cocktail being thrown at the house through an upstairs bedroom, which set a fire that was quickly doused. Another cocktail was thrown through a downstairs window seconds before **Jenkins**' husband, 28-year-old Claude **Jenkins**, told police he heard gunshots.

Late Wednesday, police were questioning a 19-year-old man, but he is not believed to be the shooter.

The neighborhood, right behind the State Fairgrounds, is filled with transient people, drug dealers, burned-out homes and vacant lots.

After hearing of two more homicides Wednesday, neighbors said they were not surprised.

"It's always strange over here," said Alan Reed, 29, who lives in the 19900 block of Omira with his elderly mother.

"We just try to mind our own business and look out for each other."

Suzette Hackney can be reached at 1-313-222-6672 or by E-mail at hackney@freepress.com.

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