

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

Detroit News, The (MI) - Tuesday, January 14, 2003

Author: The Detroit News ; Ronald J. Hansen

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.

Edition: No Dot

Section: Metro

Page: 07C

Index Terms: DRUG ; TRAFFIC ; POLICE ; ARRESTS ; MURDER-CHILDREN ; DETROIT

Dateline: DETROIT

Record Number: det15023208

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