

# HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## News Release



Media Contact:  
Kathryn Janicek  
(612) 919-5918

### West Metro Drug Task Force Makes Big Dent in Drug Trade

**March 5, 2008 (MINNEAPOLIS)** – The West Metro Drug Task Force is producing significant results in suburban narcotics investigations. The West Metro Drug Task Force is made up of the Mound, Orono and Medina Police Departments; West Hennepin Public Safety; and is commanded by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office.

The West Metro Drug Task Force was established in 2003 after a suburban Hennepin County school district approached area police departments requesting help fighting drugs in the community and schools. The police chiefs developed the task force with local elected officials and assistance from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. The most successful year so far was 2007.

#### **2007 West Metro Drug Task Force Successes:**

- **42 guns seized**
- **\$18 million worth of drugs seized (street value)**
  - 44,000 ounces of marijuana**
  - 3,500 marijuana plants**
  - 700 grams of cocaine seized**
  - 60 grams of methamphetamine**
  - 30 grams of crack cocaine**
  - 50 grams of heroin**
  - 450 hits of ecstasy**
- **\$410,000 seized and 4 lakeshore properties**
- **108 people arrested or issued complaints**
- **99 search warrants executed**
- **86 cases opened**

“This type of success does not just happen,” says Medina Police Chief Ed Belland. “It comes down to hard work. The members of the West Metro Drug Task Force are a great group of dedicated law enforcement personnel who really care about our communities and citizens. The departments they work for are very proud of their accomplishments.”

#### **RECENT CASES:**

The West Metro Drug Task Force (WMDTF) identified a group of young males selling high grade marijuana in the western suburbs. Following a number of controlled buys from this marijuana ring, the WMDTF was able to arrest four parties. During this investigation, officers executed four search warrants, seizing over 100 pounds of marijuana (street value \$500,000), two vehicles and approximately \$10,000 in cash. One adult male was indicted in federal court for possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance and other state charges are pending. It was later learned that the marijuana was being transported into Minnesota from Canada with one particular party receiving approximately two to 300-pounds of marijuana each month for approximately the last two or three years.

The West Metro Drug Task Force and the Southwest Hennepin Drug Task Force worked together on a group of young males selling marijuana from the western part of Hennepin County. The two drug task forces made a number of undercover and controlled buys from identified parties of this marijuana ring. After conducting surveillance for a number of days on this marijuana ring, search warrants were executed on addresses in Eden Prairie, Brooklyn Park, Minneapolis, and Rochester, seizing over 100 pounds of marijuana, 120 marijuana plants, \$350,000 in cash and four luxury vehicles. Eleven people were indicted on federal drug charges as a result of this investigation. The high grade marijuana recovered was being transported from Canada into Minnesota where this group was selling a pound of BC Bud/marijuana for approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 per pound.

###