

Area police launch search for sniper

By Teri Benas
staff writer

A 12-hour police search in northern Livonia Tuesday failed to uncover a recently released mental patient who fired a shotgun at a nurse's car traveling on Seven Mile.

The search was called off about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday after officers from Livonia, Farmington Hills, Redford Township, Southfield and Michigan State Po-

lice combed a one-square mile area east of the Livonia Mall between Seven and Eight Mile roads.

The search area included the site of the Botsford Elementary School. School district officials, school personnel, volunteers, parents and police turned out to ensure that the school was protected. Still, two-thirds of the pupils were taken home by the end of the school day as parents learned of the incident and came for their children.

Police said a 30-year-old Detroit resident with a record of assaults and gun offenses fired a short-barreled shotgun at the nurse's car about 7 a.m. Tuesday.

HE WAS identified as Marcellus Wilkins who reportedly been released from the Northville State Psychiatric Hospital earlier this month.

Det. Lt. Bobby Duren said the nurse, Persongia Barnes, 35, a Detroit resident, had seen Wilkins two weeks ago

on Seven Mile near Grand River. Duren said the man was standing at the side of the road holding a sign with the words "No California" printed on it. He apparently recognized her and waved it at her as she drove by, she told police.

Police believe Wilkins waited on Seven Mile Tuesday morning for the nurse's car and when it approached, stood up from a crouched position and fired at the car.

"He fired in a direct line. It appears that he was trying to fire through the windshield," Duren said. "She kept on going."

The pellets struck the hood of the car but the woman was unharmed, Duren said. No other cars were struck. She stopped to call police after the blast.

THE INCIDENT occurred on the northside of Seven Mile near a bridge running over a branch of the Rouge River near Angling Street.

The woman, and another motorist who witnessed the shooting, said they saw the man run north into a heavily-wooded ravine along the creek.

Duren said Tuesday a warrant had been approved by the Wayne County Prosecutor's office for Wilkins' arrest on charges of assault with intent to murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

According to Michigan State Corrections Department officials, Wilkins was listed last February as a parole violator. He was paroled in December after serving a sentence for assault with in-

tent to rob while armed in 1975. He had previously served a sentence for a concealed weapons conviction.

WHILE IMPRISONED, he picked up other penalties for an attempted prison escape and for assaulting a police employee, said the official.

Police said they knew little about his time in Northville. According to Duren, family members say he is classified as a paranoid schizophrenic.

He lives in the Plymouth-Evergreen area of Detroit in a cousin's home. Police say he hadn't been home since Monday night. He reportedly worked at odd jobs in the neighborhood but didn't have a full-time job.

The police search for Wilkins involved the Detroit canine squad and a Detroit Police helicopter which assisted a search through the underbrush following north along the winding creek.

Livonia police went door-to-door along Angling and Lathers streets in the neighborhood earlier that morning to ensure the man had not gone into any of homes and to learn whether any residents had seen the suspect.

Employers, educators discuss co-op

Employers and educators will take part in a seminar at Wayne State University at 9:30 a.m. Thursday in the McGregor Conference Center to discuss a national advertising campaign on cooperative education.

The gathering is the only Southeastern Michigan forum which brings together employers and educators to work on student co-op programs.

There will be comments on the "Economic Climate of Michigan" by Peter Brown, editor of Crain's Detroit Business Weekly. Brown will present a five-year projection of the state's economy.

John Riggs, supervisor of human resources management for the General Motors Warehousing and Distribution Division, will speak on co-op recruitment at 10:45 a.m. Maureen Garrett

from the National Commission for Co-op Education and Matthew Trupiano, chair of the Michigan Council for Cooperative Education, will discuss the national advertising campaign in a morning program.

Phil Lavender, executive director of the Michigan Council for Cooperative Education, will update the progress in the national advertising campaign on

cooperative education in a speech following lunch.

John Curcio, director of placement services at Wayne State, will present the results of a midwest co-op student employee salary survey at 2 p.m. Trupiano and Garrett will discuss marketing distribution for a Michigan advertising campaign in a concurrent session at 2 p.m.

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