

New weapon for drug war

By Dave Varga
staff writer

Oakland County law enforcement officials say they need a citizens grand jury — with its power to compel unwilling witnesses to either testify or go to jail — to help stop the flow of drugs and violence from Detroit.

"The reason why the drug dealers are moving into Oakland County is because that's where the money is," said prosecutor Richard Thompson at a press conference Thursday.

More than a dozen unsolved murders and 20 drug investigations could be solved by using the investigative powers of a citizens grand jury, Thompson said. He refused to specify which cases.

Thompson filed a request for a 17-member citizens grand jury with Oakland Circuit Court's Chief Judge Robert Anderson. A majority of the

14 judges must agree with the need for a grand jury.

CIRCUIT JUDGES will discuss the request when they meet May 23, Anderson said. He could not predict whether the judges would approve. "I haven't discussed it with everyone," Anderson said, adding that he had not yet read the petition requesting the grand jury. "I haven't had an opportunity to decide yet myself."

Oakland County's Board of Commissioners must approve money to pay for the citizens grand jury investigation. It will cost an estimated \$50,000 for six months, Thompson said.

Thompson's request for a grand jury was supported by affidavits from Oakland Sheriff John F. Nichols; Farmington Hills Chief William Dwyer, who serves as president of the Narcotics Enforcement Team; and Earl A. Krepis, president of the

Oakland County Chamber of Commerce.

Nichols' request notes that "a citizens grand jury would not only prove to be valuable to the investigation of drug gangs from Detroit into Oakland County, but its mere existence would also provide a deterrent effect to that movement."

AREA POLICE agencies voiced their support for a grand jury probe earlier this year when Thompson suggested the plan to fight "the drug war" in the county.

Police report they saw a 19 percent increase in drug-related arrests and a 26 percent increase in the seizure of cocaine in 1988 as compared to 1987.

"Drug distribution networks operating in Oakland County," Thompson said, "especially those with common ethnic or neighborhood ties, are notoriously unwilling to cooperate with law enforcement and these groups

are virtually impossible to penetrate utilizing ordinary investigative procedures."

A citizens grand jury, selected like any other jury, can compel witnesses to appear and testify in a secret hearing. It can offer lesser drug dealers immunity to testify against higher-level dealers and, if they refuse to testify, can charge them with contempt and put them in jail.

THOMPSON SAID his office would combine with the U.S. Attorney's office to provide a "full-court press" against drug dealers. Assistant prosecutor Lawrence Bunting would coordinate the grand jury investigation team, which will include other assistant prosecutors Jeffrey Butler, Charles Semchena and Michael Sheridan.

The grand jury could be empaneled within about 60 days of approval, Thompson said.

around Oakland

RN's group hosts talk

The League for Educational Advancement for Registered Nurses will present a session on "Disease Concepts of Chemical Dependency" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Covington Middle School in Bloomfield Township.

The session will be repeated at the same time and location on Wednesday.

Kathleen Larkin, clinical nurse specialist at Pontiac General Hospital and a volunteer trainer at Maple Grove Substance Abuse Treatment Center in West Bloomfield.

Entrance fee is \$10. For more information call Jerilyn Pilcher at 681-2949 or Alice Pompea at 642-0996.

Free planning for careers

"Transitions," a free seminar series offering support, educational guidance and career planning, begins this week at the five Oakland Community College campuses.

Each session meets once a week for six weeks. Participants are asked

to telephone ahead to reserve a place.

The session begins at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Highland Lakes campus, call 360-3041; at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Royal Oak campus, 987-5725; at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Southfield campus, 522-2624; at 10 a.m. Thursday at the Auburn Hills campus, 553-4269; and at 9:30 a.m. Monday, May 22, at the Orchard Ridge campus, 471-7602.

Law test prep at OU

Students can learn effective test-taking strategies to help increase their scores on the Law School Admission Test at a series of workshops beginning 6:30-9:30 p.m. Thursday at Oakland University near Rochester.

The six session course costs \$165 and may be repeated without charge. To register call the continuing education office at 370-3120.

Chamber to host mixer

The Oakland County Chamber of Commerce will host members of the business community 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Shield's Restaurant on Telegraph just north of 10 Mile in Southfield.

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and cash bar will be available. The event is free for chamber members, \$10 for non-members. For reservations, call 683-4747 or 644-1229.

New tours at Cranbrook

Beginning May 18, Cranbrook House and Gardens Auxiliary will offer tours and luncheon every Thursday.

Tours of historic Cranbrook House are available at 10:15 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. Visits to the gardens or boutique may be made before or after tours.

Cost for the house tour and garden visit is \$5.50.

Luncheon on the terrace is served at 12:15 p.m. and is available to tour guests for \$8. Reservations are required by 4 p.m. the previous Tuesday.

Cranbrook House and Gardens, affiliated with the Cranbrook Educational Community, are located at 360 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills. For reservation information, call 645-3149.

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