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Drug sting nets three arrests

By Charles Mattox
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Police officers made three arrests and executed search warrants in Nicholas and Bourbon County over the weekend, when they nabbed several pounds of marijuana several thousands of dollars in cash and a quantity of cocaine.

All three of the arrested were Hispanic males.

Cecil Navaro, no age given, and Fernando Lopez,

39, both of Millers Station Road, Carlisle, were arrested after a joint investigation was conducted by officers with Kentucky State Police Dry Ridge Post, officers with the Gateway/Bufallo Trace Narcotics Task Force and officers with the Kentucky State Police Drug Enforcement Special Investigations Unit.

Navaro and Lopez were charged with trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree (cocaine) and trafficking in marijuana, less

than eight ounces, according to Sgt. Len Fields and a press release issued by the state's Drug Enforcement Special Investigations Unit located in Lexington.

Blas Castillo, 40, of Steel Ford Road, Paris was also arrested and charged with trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree (cocaine) and trafficking in marijuana, more than five pounds.

"Between one half of an ounce and one ounce of cocaine was taken during the

execution of the warrants and the arrests," Sgt. Fields said Monday.

"Officers also confiscated \$3,160 from the Carlisle residence and \$2,859 from the Paris residence."

Fields said nearly six pounds of marijuana was taken from the Paris residence.

Fields also commented on the origins of the marijuana.

"We believe the marijuana was grown in Mexico, Fields said.

"We do not believe at this time that the marijuana was grown locally."

Navaro and Lopez were lodged in the Montgomery County Detention Center where Lopez remains incarcerated on \$10,000 cash bond.

According to Montgomery County jail officials, Navaro posted \$10,000 cash bond over the weekend and was released.

Castillo remains incarcerated in the Bourbon County Jail on \$20,000 cash bond.

"The search warrants and arrests stem from on-going drug trafficking investigations in the Nicholas and Bourbon County areas," The KSP press release states.

"Additional arrests are pending."

According to Fields, no guns or weapons were found during the execution of the search warrants.

Fields also explained that a total of eight officers were involved in the arrests and execution of the search warrants.

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Festival officially moving

By Charles Mattox
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It's official, the Blackberry Festival is moving from downtown Carlisle to the West End Park this July.

That determination was made when members of the Nicholas County Fiscal Court met in the Nicholas County Courthouse and heard from officers with the local American Legion, who have historically sponsored the annual July festival.

Court members previously voted to no longer allow carnival rides in the courthouse yard after this year's Blackberry Festival, after a carnival employee sawed off a limb of one of the ancient oak trees in the yard.

The saving of the limb, which was apparently done without permission, infuriated Magistrate Daryl Stacy and several other magistrates who voted in support of Stacy's motion to never allow carnival rides to set up in the courthouse yard for any future Blackberry Festival.

Magistrate Steve Hamilton was the single "nay" vote in the decision expressing a desire to not make the decision until more public input was sought.

Since that July meeting and decision, court members have continuously discussed the possibility of moving the festival to the West End Park.

Although there will be limited activities this July in downtown Carlisle, the festival will be noticeably altered.

"We won't be selling booth spaces to vendors downtown," Jim Galbraith, Legion Treasurer, told The Mercury during discussion with court members. "We still plan on having the Festival Parade downtown and have the crowning of the

Queen downtown, but we won't sell booth spaces."

Galbraith, Penny Hogge and Danny Hughes, Commander of the American Legion, had a 45-minute discussion with court members about their intent for the year's festival during the court meeting.

They said they were committed to sponsoring the festival as they had in years past and said they would work with court members and city officials in making a smooth transition from downtown Carlisle to the West End Park.

They also probed court members for their intent on improving the park, which they said would be a key component to future success of the festival.

Previous discussion on the

subject by court members indicated members wished to have an area of the West End Park blacktopped and improvements made to the park's infrastructure, including improvements to utilities and marking.

"Have you got the money to do this?" Galbraith asked court members regarding the improvements.

"We're committed to this," Magistrate Daryl Stacy said. "We've made the commitment and we won't back up on it. We want to do this right."

Judge-Executive Larry Timmer commented on desired improvements for vehicles entering and exiting the park.

"My vision is to have the

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Photo by Charles Mattox

Woman injured

Nicholas County Firefighters, ambulance personnel and Sheriff Dick Garrett, joined KSP Trooper G. Ison who quickly responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 68 near Millersville, Tuesday afternoon at approximately 4:30 p.m. Officials said Nicholas County Councilwoman Amanda Moore was transported to the Nicholas County Hospital.

Dunn pleads guilty to drug charges

A Carlisle man, who was a fugitive from justice for several months, pled guilty to drug trafficking charges in Nicholas District Court Jan. 22 and was sentenced to nine years imprisonment.

Jeffrey Dunn, 25, of Dunn Road, Carlisle, who was indicted by two Nicholas County Grand Jurors on

drug trafficking charges in 2007, appeared in Nicholas District Court with his attorney, Public Defender Jennifer Wittmeyer, and entered a plea of guilty to trafficking in a controlled substance, first degree.

Dunn's trafficking charge was committed in Oct. 2006, according to the indictment

and other court documents. On the recommendation of Commonwealth's Attorney Doug Wright, a charge of persistent felony offender was dismissed.

Wright recommended Dunn serve nine years for the charge, with this charge running concurrent with another drug trafficking

charge. "The penalty seems appropriate," Wright said of the recommended sentence.

Dunn successfully evaded law enforcement officials for several months before being apprehended by veteran Park and Wildlife Officer Herbert Booth Oct. 13.

"I'm glad it's over and

I'm ready to get the process started," Dunn said that afternoon as he prepared to be transported to the Montgomery County Detention Center.

Dunn appeared healthy and in good physical condition during his court appearance earlier this month.

Reimbursement, accounting cause change in hospital structure

Change seems to be the only constant in the provision of healthcare. Research and technology have driven many changes in the manner that health care services are provided.

Insurance companies, Medicare and Medicaid have drastically changed how health care is paid for over the last 20 to 30 years.

In response to the many changes in how health care is paid for, and in an effort to maximize the cash flow for Johnson Mathers Health Care, the Board of Trustees has made the decision to create a separate not-for-profit corporation to operate the Hospital.

This separation of the organization into two separate entities should be a seamless transition and the community should not see any changes in the provision of services or in the day-to-day operations of the organizations.

The two entities will continue to operate in much the same manner as today. No employee jobs will be

negatively impacted by the change.

Under the current Medicare regulations that govern how Johnson Mathers is paid for services, payments from Medicare and Medicaid on an annual basis are approximately \$200,000 less than the actual cost to provide those services.

The hospital is reimbursed based on cost, but

the Nursing Home is reimbursed based on a case-mix formula.

The methodology used by Medicare to determine the cost per day for the Hospital allocates a substantial portion of Hospital costs to the Nursing Home.

The Nursing Home is not cost-based reimbursed thus those costs are not paid to either the hospital or Nurs-

ing Home.

The only method to recoup those costs for the Hospital is through a reorganization into two separate entities.

The Nursing Home will continue to operate under the corporate name of Johnson Mathers Health Care, Inc. with a seven member Board of Trustees. The new name for the Hospital will be Nicholas Community Hospi-

tal, Inc. and that organization will also have a seven member Board of Trustees.

The Boards many not have more than three of the same persons on each Board.

The exact date for the organizational split has not been announced, however, the Board of Trustees anticipates the change to be announced before June 1, 2008.

Man with local ties found murdered

By Charles Mattox
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A Mt. Sterling man with several family ties to Nicholas County was found murdered along a roadway in Powell County, Sunday. His murderer remains at large.

Michael Flora, 22, was found murdered along Ky. 15, just off of the Mountain Parkway in Powell County Jan. 20 by hikers.

"Mr. Flora was a victim

of murder," Kentucky State Police Trooper Ralph Lockard of the Morehead Post said Tuesday.

"Mr. Flora suffered multiple gunshot wounds," Lockard said he could not comment on many aspects of the ongoing investigation, but he did say that robbery was not believed to be a motive for Flora's murder.

"We found Mr. Flora's billfold on his person and we have no reason to believe that robbery played a part in his death," Lockard said.

KSP Detective Larry Bowling is leading the murder investigation, according to Lockard.

Lockard said Flora had a vehicle, but his vehicle was still parked outside of his home, and Flora was reported as being last seen leaving his apartment in another vehicle.

"We believe Mr. Flora left Mt. Sterling with another individual," Lockard said and added that Flora was murdered outside of a vehicle along the roadway with

his body just out of sight of vehicular traffic.

"We have taken physical evidence into custody from the murder scene, which we hope will help us solve this case," Lockard said.

Members of the Powell County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Forestry service and the Powell County Coroner's Office are assisting the Kentucky State Police.

Lockard said the investigation is intensifying. An official suspect has not been named.

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