



Photo by Mark Millican

Members of the Zell Miller Mountain Parkway Drug Task Force, at left, begin to remove their haz-mat suits after carrying meth lab material out of a residence at 108 Northcutt Road. Two deputies went to the residence Friday to find a man who had warrants out of Tennessee on him, and then received permission from the man to have the residence searched after he was arrested, said Detective Coy Turner of the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office.

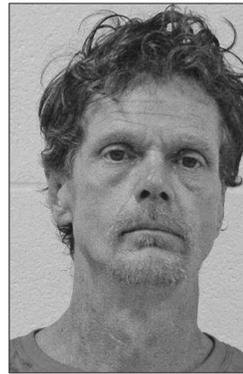
Meth

— from 1A

Sheriff Stacy Nicholson said Friday a male and female were being questioned regarding the lab.

"This investigation is continuing and other persons could be arrested and/or other charges could be added," he said. "I'm very pleased that no one has been injured in this process. These cooking labs are very dangerous and officers are to be commended for doing an excellent job not only in the discovery and apprehension, but also in following the procedures for processing the lab."

A resident of the neighborhood, Jennifer Wright, said she was "completely shocked" to learn of the meth lab. But she added she has called 911 twice with her suspicions about



Smith



Yother

activity near the house on Northcutt Road, with one call as recently as last week.

"There were some shady-looking fellows walking up and down the road at night," she said. "They were just not respectable-looking guys, walking up and down the road at night without any flashlights. We've been making sure our doors

were locked at night."

Smith has been denied bond on the felony charges, according to a jail spokeswoman. He has a hold from Polk County, Tenn., on vehicle theft and a probation violation. Yother was given a \$2,500 bond by Magistrate Court Judge Roger Kincaid, but had not made bond by Tuesday afternoon.

Anatomy of a meth lab bust

by Mark Millican

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Three Gilmer County Sheriff's officers didn't know what to expect when they assembled in the predawn hours of Friday, May 17, to serve warrants on a man wanted for vehicle theft and a probation violation.

Deputy Josh Chancey said an informant got the ball rolling, then the officers' instincts kicked in.

Allen Ray Smith, 46, of 108 Northcutt Road, was charged with seven counts of manufacturing methamphetamine after a meth lab was discovered in a shack at his residence. He has also been charged with parole violation. Barbara Yother, 46, of the same address, was charged with felony possession of meth in connection with the lab.

"We got a tip from an informant who said Allen Smith had warrants out of Tennessee," said Chancey. "I don't even know (the informant's) name. The informant called the Polk County, Tenn. (sheriff's office), and Polk County called us and said, 'Yes, we do have warrants on him and we want him.'"

An early visit

After getting descrip-

tions of the property from the informant, Chancey said he found the driveway around 4:30 a.m.

"We assembled our guys — Sgt. (Greg) McClure, Deputy (Ryan) Franklin and myself — and we go down to this residence and find Ms. Yother, she was later arrested in connection (with the meth lab), and Mr. Smith inside this residence," he said during an interview.

After confirming the warrants, Chancey said he read Smith his Miranda Rights, then asked him if he minded the officers searching the premises.

"There was no physical indication at that point that anything illegal was going on," he said. "We didn't smell anything at that point in time, and what was funny was he said, 'Absolutely, go ahead, no problem.' Since it's a single-room residence, I asked the female, Ms. Yoder, the same thing, if she had any problem — I asked her numerous times — with me searching the residence."

That led to finding items "that didn't add up."

"The first thing I searched was a case for reading glasses," said

Chancey. "I opened it up, there was a glass (smoking pipe), several straws, some needles, that kind of thing. Of course, that perks us up just a little bit. We continued the search and found more smoking devices, more dirty needles. I actually tested some of the residue in one of the straws and it (came back) positive for methamphetamine. That's when we found two five-gallon buckets with some tubes with what looked like water in the bottom (and) we're thinking, 'Well, this could be something more.'"

Lab 'bubbling, working'

What they saw next were standard meth lab items — Drano, lithium batteries and lighter fluid. Then they found the lab was in active production.

"Underneath the sink we see this bottle that's got this white crystal stuff that's in the bottom of it, and a clear liquid on top," Chancey detailed. "It's bubbling, it's 'working' and building pressure. At that point in time we say, 'Hey, we need to back out of here' and we called a meth lab technician. He confirmed our suspicions it was a

meth lab."

He said they called the haz-mat team and the (Zell Miller Mountain Parkway) Drug Task Force. Chancey said he and his fellow officers had a hunch about the place.

"I've been a cop for a little over five years, and I guess it's more instinct than something that I saw that tipped me off," said Chancey.

He called the discovery of the lab "a joint effort" with McClure and Franklin.

"It was no more me than it was them," he said. "This was an entire group effort from our whole shift."

Task Force Commander Brandon Owens said the lab could have produced four to six grams of meth — possibly more — in just one batch, and it appeared Smith and Yother had "cooked" several batches.

"They were cooking more than a 'user amount' there," he said. "What we assume they would do is cook it and take out what they were going to use, and sell the rest to sponsor another 'cook' (session). There were seven one-pot (labs) located at the residence ... so they had really, in the time period they had been there, done seven 'cooks.'"

Both Smith and Yoder remained in the county detention center Tuesday.

Graduates

— from 1A

the ceremony as a dignified event. While the event will be held at the stadium, it is a serious event, not a game. No pets, alcohol or tobacco will be permitted at the ceremony. Small children must be attended and need to sit with their parents."

School officials have also stressed that parking is limited, and guests

should plan to arrive early in order to get a space and make their way to the stadium before the ceremony begins.

The school system will provide complimentary shuttle services for transporting attendees from the parking lots at Gilmer High School and Mountain View Elementary to the graduation venue. Parking in the lot in front of Gilmer Middle School, which is accessible via Highway 5, will

only be open to those with permits. A limited number of handicap parking spots will be available in the upper stadium parking lot.

During the ceremony, the GHS valedictorian and salutatorian will address the graduating class of 2013. As of press deadline Tuesday evening the names of these students had not yet been released.

ETC3 will carry the commencement exercise live beginning at 10 a.m.

Letters

— from 4A

Mr. Conrad may truly be trying to turn his life around. He may be completely different than when he was convicted (although statistics don't agree with that assumption). How are we supposed to react?

Steve Ross
Ellijay

The price of garbage

Recently, I was at one of our county convenience centers to dispose of my weekly trash.

This particular week, I had a 13-gallon bag of household trash outside of my two 30-gallon bags I pay for every week. After

disposing of my trash, I then went up to the attendant to pay for my trash. A usual 30-32 gallon black bag is \$1, but when I asked the attendant how much I needed to pay for my one little 13-gallon bag, the attendant said \$1.

I said, "Do what?" You mean to tell me that Gilmer County is now making us pay \$1 for a 13-gallon bag if it is just an odd bag? I think that is unfair with the given fact that much of our community has a hard time just coming up with the money to dispose of the normal household bag usage. I could understand being charged 25 to 50 cents for that one bag.

Anyone else out there feeling overcharged?

Holly Davis
Ellijay

