



April 12, 2012

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

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I. **Introduction**

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here today. My name is Tim Heaphy and I'm the United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia.

We called this event to announce a significant milestone in a joint federal and state prosecution - the dismantling of a drug organization that brought crack cocaine into our community. Today in United States District Court the individuals responsible for that activity were sentenced to lengthy terms in federal prison. I want to talk about the

investigation which led to this successful result. I want to highlight what this case shows about drugs in our community. Finally, I want to talk about the holistic way in which we should address the persistent issue of drug use and abuse.

II. US v. Reagan Richards et al.

In 2010, officers from the JADE Drug Task Force, along with their law enforcement partners from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, began investigating a criminal organization that was distributing crack cocaine in the Belmont area of Charlottesville.

JADE officers did what they have done in this community for years - methodically gathered information and worked up the chain of command within this criminal enterprise. They made undercover purchases, debriefed arrestees, conducted surveillance, recovered physical evidence. They gradually came to understand the hierarchy and daily operations of this drug conspiracy.

They learned that like any organization, this conspiracy had a

hierarchy of employees ranging from the CEO to the street level dealers.

The head of this particular conspiracy, Reagan Richards, brought crack cocaine into the area through multiple sources, some of whom are facing state charges. Once in possession of the drugs, Reagan Richards used his 18-year-old nephew, Rashard Richards, to distribute the drugs to other dealers and to collect the proceeds from sales.

Reagan Richards, through his trusted nephew, was able to set-up a distribution network of six street-level dealers who took advantage of the addiction of others in order to line their own pockets.

Four of those co-conspirators: Rebecca Brannock, Charles Gibson, Montana Mawyer and Teresa Sims have all been convicted of federal drug crimes. An additional defendant, Laurel Carson, was an addict and runner who sold crack for Richards in order to support her own drug habit.

In addition to selling crack cocaine, many of these street-level dealers contributed other services to the group. Those activities included

driving other members of the conspiracy to drug deals, storing crack cocaine for the conspiracy and renting local motel rooms where powder cocaine was converted to crack cocaine and packaged for distribution.

The team of investigators on the JADE task force worked with prosecutors, both here in our office and in the City and County, to bring this organization down. Working together, we brought criminal charges against eleven members of this conspiracy. Seven of the defendants were convicted of federal drug charges, and an additional four defendants are facing state charges for their roles in the conspiracy.

This group of men and women was responsible for distributing almost 4,000 grams of crack cocaine in the Charlottesville community between June 2010 and October 2011. To give you a sense of perspective on that number, each small user-sized serving of crack is about .1 to .2 of a gram. That means about 40,000 servings of this illegal substance was sold to users in and around Charlottesville.

Thanks to the hard work of those agencies represented by the men and women behind me today, all of these individuals have been brought

to justice and have been fairly sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

- Reagan Richards: 240 months CBOP
- Rashard Richards: 90 months CBOP
- Rebecca Brannock: 42 months CBOP
- Laurel Carson: 30 months CBOP
- Montana Mawyer: 42 months CBOP
- Teressa Simms: 108 months CBOP

I want to recognize some of those agencies who provided the manpower that put these folks behind bars and thank them for their commitment to ridding our community of drugs.

- Col. Sellers from the Albemarle Co. Police Department.
- Jon McKay, Brian O'Donnell and Don Campbell from JADE.
- Capt. Wendy Lewis and Capt. Gary Pleasants from the Charlottesville Police Department.

III. The Persistent and Widespread Problem of Drug Abuse

When the public thinks about the distribution of drugs like crack cocaine, they think it happens somewhere else - inside of large cities, neighborhoods unlike those in places like Charlottesville, Virginia. This case shows the stereotype of crack and other hard drugs as an urban problem, confined to dangerous areas far from here, is completely inaccurate. Those of us who work in law enforcement in this community are all too aware of the impact these types of drugs are having not only in our cities but in the more suburban and rural areas of our district and this country.

This case is a prime example of the epidemic of drug addiction in all parts of our community. This organization operated largely in the Belmont area of Charlottesville, a community in which new restaurants are opening and homes are being renovated. It is a wonderful and vibrant community. But even places like Belmont are not immune to crime and drug addiction.

Addiction, drug abuse, drug distribution and other crimes are not

only an urban problem. These problems exist throughout our community. During the course of the investigation of this case, we learned that some customers of this business were professionals with six figure incomes. Some of those drug customers had trouble paying their bills because they were spending so much of their substantial income on crack cocaine. One of the members of this conspiracy went to an elite private high school in this area and came from a good family. These folks live all over Charlottesville - in places like Belmont and elsewhere within our wonderful community. They are our neighbors and friends. Yet they struggle with the lure of crack cocaine, fast money and drug addiction.

There are two lessons here - both of which are important for folks watching or listening to understand. First, this case shows that those of us who work in law enforcement will continue to focus our resources on significant criminal activity, no matter the location of the offense. JADE has a long history of successful prosecutions of cases much like this one. They have focused their efforts on places all over town. They've made

cases on Hardy Drive, Prospect Avenue, the old Garrett Square. They've pursued University students who have used and sold drugs. And they've worked in places like Belmont. In short - they have and will continue to identify and bring to justice people who push this poison in every corner of Charlottesville - rich or poor, black or white.

I want to make that message very clearly to anyone reading this or watching this on television, if you sell drugs in our communities, no matter the zip code, myself and the men and women standing behind me, will find you and bring you to justice. We will not tolerate the influx of these poisons into our communities.

The second lesson here is that as effective as our law enforcement effort may be, it can't solve this problem - drug use and addiction - alone. We can't arrest our way out of this problem. While we must remove drug businesses from our community, we must also do what we can to dry up demand and bring assistance to those who struggle with addiction to these harmful substances.

I believe that we must use the resources of this United States

Attorney's Office and the Department of Justice to attack both ends of this problem. While we must pursue cases like this one, we must also do what we can to support viable prevention and treatment programs which operate in the communities impacted by drug abuse.

We must combine our law enforcement efforts with effective prevention if we are to successfully combat the persistent drug problem and achieve true community safety. These efforts need to be consciously and intentionally linked.

The prosecution of Mr. Richards and his co-conspirators is an important victory. But alone it won't solve the problem. We must now support local prevention and addiction programs to ensure that those among us fighting addiction can break the cycle and lead a productive, sober life.

Our office is here to help. We have a Community Outreach Coordinator who is not involved in criminal cases like the Richards' drug case. She is exclusively focused on doing what we can to help prevention and treatment programs. We have already connected

prevention programs across Virginia with federal resources. Those programs provide youth recreation opportunities to children, intensive counseling and treatment for people with substance abuse, and assistance to ex-offenders who are returning to our communities after serving their time.

We will continue to identify and try to help folks working to pursue front end solutions to this and other criminal justice challenges. It is only with this fulsome, comprehensive approach that we can make an impact on this persistent problem.

We only make a difference when we work together. I again want to thank those men and women who investigated and prosecuted this crime for their service to the community. Our streets are a little bit safer thanks to your work.

Thank you all for coming, we will now answer any questions you may have.

