

SANTA ROSA

10 arrested in sting leaving courthouse

Published: Friday, June 12, 2009 at 4:03 a.m.

Ten people were arrested Thursday in a law enforcement sting outside the Sonoma County Courthouse in Santa Rosa targeting habitual drunken drivers, people with suspended licenses or those without licenses.

From 8:30 a.m. to noon, undercover officers with the "Avoid the 13" campaign followed people from the courtroom to the parking lot to make sure they were not driving, said Sgt. Ken Savano of the Petaluma Police Department traffic unit.

While some took buses or had designated drivers, 10 got behind the wheel and drove off, only to be stopped by motorcycle officers waiting north and south of the complex, Savano said.

Of the 10 drivers arrested, six were for suspicion of driving on a suspended license. All but one of them were suspended for a prior DUI offense, Savano said.

The remaining drivers were arrested on suspicion of driving without a license, and one driver had outstanding misdemeanor warrants, he said.

Ten vehicles were towed and nine were impounded for 30 days, Savano said.

Sonoma County's 13 police agencies worked together on the sting.

The program is paid for by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

-- Paul Payne



September 24, 2008

On Wednesday, September 24, 2008, Santa Rosa Police in conjunction with Petaluma Police and California Highway Patrol, conducted a special enforcement operation targeting unlicensed or suspended license drivers. Officers monitored unlicensed or suspended licensed drivers who were appearing in court for prior offenses of these violations. Those drivers that had previous arrests for these license violations and observed driving to or from court were stopped by traffic officers and enforcement action taken. The purpose of this operation is to reduce the number of repeat offenders of driver's license violations as they are a detriment to traffic safety in our community.

Approximately 79 people had appearance dates on September 24th for driving on a suspended license or for driving unlicensed. Six drivers were stopped after leaving the courthouse. Five of those drivers were arrested for violating driver's license laws. Each of the drivers' vehicles was impounded for 30 days for operating the vehicle without a license or with a suspended license.

Arrested and cited to appear in court were:

V*****, 31 year old Santa Rosa resident

N*****, 50 year old Santa Rosa resident

G*****, 24 year old Healdsburg resident

R*****, 37 year old Santa Rosa resident

A*****, 61 year old Santa Rosa resident

Similar operations will be conducted in the future in efforts to reduce the number of repeat offenders for driver license violations and to improve traffic safety in our community. Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

April 17, 2008

On Thursday, April 17, 2008, Santa Rosa Police conducted a special enforcement operation targeting unlicensed or suspended license drivers. Officers monitored unlicensed or suspended licensed drivers who were appearing in court for prior offenses of these violations. Those drivers with previous arrests who were observed driving to or from court were stopped by traffic officers and enforcement action taken. The purpose of this operation is to reduce the number of repeat offenders of driver's license violations as they are a detriment to traffic safety in our community.

Approximately 30 people had appearance dates today for driving on a suspended license or for driving unlicensed. Three drivers were stopped after leaving the courthouse. All of those drivers were arrested for violating driver's license laws. Each of the driver's vehicles was impounded for 30 days for operating the vehicle without a license or with a suspended license.

Arrested and cited to appear in court were:

B*****, 47 year old Nacasio resident

J*****, 40 year old Santa Rosa resident

V*****, 40 year old Petaluma resident

Similar operations will be conducted in the future in efforts to reduce the number of repeat offenders for driver license violations and to improve traffic safety in our community. Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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SANTA ROSA STING 8 cited for illegally driving from court Operation targets drivers back in cars after answering charges of driving without a license

By LORI A. CARTER

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Published: Thursday, November 9, 2006 at 4:30 a.m.

Moments after walking out of court Wednesday to answer charges of driving without proper licenses, eight Sonoma County men got back into their cars and drove away - smack into the middle of a police sting targeting unlicensed drivers.

M*****, 33, of Sebastopol was one of the unlucky few who drove themselves to court despite not having proper driver's licenses. M*****'s \$250 fine for the original ticket will likely be repeated with Wednesday's citation, and it could be as much as \$1,500 to retrieve his vehicle from a 30-day impoundment. A landscaper who drives in from the west county to work, M***** said he is working to legalize his immigration status so he can get a valid California driver's license.

"I have to work," he said. "It's hard. I have a family to support. This is the only way." Though sympathetic, Petaluma Police Officer Ron Klein told M***** he couldn't look the other way.

"I know, it's a tough deal," he said as another officer wrote a citation in a parking lot a few blocks from the courthouse. "I'm sorry, but we can't let you drive. That's the law and there are a lot of reasons why the law is in effect."

Santa Rosa Police Sgt. Doug Schlieff, who supervised the half-day sting, said statistics show that most hit-and-run crashes are caused by drivers who are unlicensed or who have had their driving privileges suspended by the Department of Motor Vehicles. A grant from the state Office of Traffic Safety paid for the operation, conducted by undercover and motorcycle officers from the Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Rohnert Park police departments. Schlieff said police have conducted about a half-dozen stings this year and may do more in the next few months.

"We have yet to have an operation where someone doesn't drive away from a court appearance for being an unlicensed driver or driving on a suspended license," he said. "The goal here is to deter people from doing that."

Repeated citations for driving without a license can result in revocation. Impoundment fees can amount to more than a car is worth, causing many owners to abandon their vehicles at the impoundment lot, police say. Undercover officers stationed inside courtrooms Wednesday were keeping an eye on about 50 defendants scheduled to appear in court on license violations.

If people appeared to be alone, officers followed them outside to their vehicles and alerted uniformed officers to stop them if they drove away. Eight people were pulled over while driving away after court, Schlieff said. Seven were cited for not having proper licenses and another was cited for not carrying his license.

Seven cars were towed and will be impounded for 30 days unless the owner produces a valid driver's license. All eight drivers cited had Latino surnames and several presented Mexican identification cards in lieu of driver's licenses or California identification cards. Undocumented residents cannot legally obtain a driver's license in California. Officers did not question the drivers' immigration status.

One man who appeared in court on a charge of driving without a license presented an Oregon driver's license when Santa Rosa Officer Jason Brandt stopped him a quarter-mile from the courthouse. The man, who said he has lived in California for four months, was cited for not having a California license.

Unlike California, Oregon does not require proof of legal residency to obtain a driver's license.

In addition to M*****, the men cited by police were identified as A*****, 24, of Rohnert Park; J*****, 28, and U*****, 34, of Santa Rosa; F*****, 33, of Petaluma; and A*****, 27, of Windsor.

Cited for driving on a suspended license were J*****, 47, and J*****, 20, both of Santa Rosa.