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Six arrested in raid of suspected Whiteaker bicycle chop shop

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Six people were arrested Tuesday and a seventh was taken to Lane County's drug court after Eugene police served a search warrant on a house in the Whiteaker neighborhood suspected of housing an illegal bicycle chop shop.

Early Tuesday morning, officers with the Eugene police Street Crimes Unit removed items from the home on the 900 block of West Fourth Avenue, putting them in the front yard to be logged into a computer system by police. The items included guitars, televisions, electronics, power tools and bicycles. A variety of bicycles were strewn across the lawn in various states of dismantling. Police also recovered user amounts of heroin and methamphetamine, psilocybin mushrooms, controlled substance pills prescribed to people who were not the residents, two drivers licenses and four University of Oregon student IDs not tied to residents, one possibly stolen REI co-op bicycle, and several pounds of suspected homemade butane hash oil. A number of methamphetamine pipes and hypodermic needles also were found in the home.

Butane hash oil manufacturing has been linked to residential explosions, fires and injuries. Some property recovered was from a burglary on Monday. Eugene police said an abatement process to close the residence is being pursued.

Those arrested range in age from 24 to 62.

The home, Sgt. Michael Ware said, is a rebuttal to those who say drug use is a victimless crime, as police believe most of the items were stolen to support drug habits.

"This has been a prolific problem house for the city and for this community for several years," Ware said. "Over the last five years, we've had over 70 calls for service here at this location and the calls have ranged from disputes to identity

theft to drug trafficking charges to narcotics use. We've been getting lots of complaints around stolen property coming and going from this place. And today, we're finding evidence of that stolen property with our search warrant as well as additional drug use."

One of those who complained to police is Fred Roellig, who has lived a few houses down from the problem house for the last nine years. He and his son, August, watched from the corner Tuesday morning as police came in and out of the house.

"There's been stolen bikes in the neighborhood. I've seen many times bicycles and bicycle parts being brought into the house," Roellig said. "I just saw that just three days ago. A guy rolled up on a bicycle with three bicycle wheels over his shoulder and was waiting here in front of this house."

Ware said they found evidence of a bike chop shop operation, including bike parts and pieces, like frames, wheels and handlebars.

Todd Richard, 49, who lives a block away from the home, said he found his tricycle, his cane and other items that were stolen in August at the home in question. Richard, who has a disability, was called by a friend who had seen people dismantling the stolen tricycle in the home's backyard. Richard and his friends went to the home and asked for the bicycle and cane back. They were allowed by the residents to walk through the home and collect what belonged to Richard.

"They were pretty out of it," Richard said. "They were super nice about it. They said one of their associates that no one knows had stolen my bike, I was finding my stuff all over while I was walking through the house. Somebody apologized, someone was mad, but obviously they stole my stuff and there was no explanation they could come up with for why it was in their house. So they didn't say much."

Richard reported the theft to Eugene police. He said he was sorry that anybody had to go to jail, but he doesn't know what else could have been done.

Roellig, however, was happy the seven got arrested. Their names have not yet been released. Formal charges are expected Wednesday afternoon.

“We’ve always had lots of suspicions, from the shaking of the cans when they spray paint (the bikes) at night, I can hear that across the fence, to the heroin needles being thrown over the fence,” he said. “So yeah, we’re very happy. We’ve never done anything to them, but they’ve always just been bad neighbors.”