

NEWS

Dandridge Police seize 'herbal incense'

Raids net 300 containers, 100 smoking pipes

BY STEVE MARION
Standard Banner Staff Writer

Mr. Smiley. Zero Gravity. Dead Man Walking.

The brand names under which a plant known as *Salvia divinorum* is sold give a strong hint that their real purpose is something beyond herbal incense.

Yet the labels on the tiny glass jars and plastic packets, available at some local convenience stores, state that their contents are "not for human consumption."

Investigators at the Dandridge Police Department don't believe that, said Chief Carson Williams.

Last Thursday, officers swept three stores clean of over 300 containers of the substance. They also confiscated over 100 glass smoking pipes and several sets of digital scales commonly used in the illegal drug trade.

"We were acting on numerous



Not for human consumption?

The labels on containers of *Salvia divinorum*, sold under various brand names, indicate the substance is not to be consumed, but the disclaimer didn't keep Dandridge Police from confiscating the materials at local stores. (Staff Photo - Steve Marion)

complaints from citizens," said Williams. "These materials were either in plain view at the stores or could be obtained easily just by asking."

Salvia divinorum is a plant native to the Mexican cloud forests that produces short-lived hallucinations when smoked or eaten. Known as diviner's or seer's sage,

it has been used by Mazatec shamans for hundreds of years, and recently has become a drug of choice for American teenagers interested in their own form of shamanism. Information about it has spread rapidly over the internet, and many convenience store owners, lured by profits, have set up little herbal head shops.

Dandridge Police used an undercover operative to purchase the herb on September 17 and November 4 at BP on Patriot Drive, Fastop BP on South Highway 92, and Marathon on Highway 92, all within city limits. Armed with search warrants, they returned last Friday to seize the materials.

"Tennessee law makes it a misdemeanor to produce, manufacture, or possess this hallucinogenic plant," said Detective Lt. Kenny Lodwick. "We'll send the materials we confiscated to the lab for confirmation."

Detective Lt. Kevin Bunch and Officers Dave Hagger and Chris Fair are assisting in the investigation.

Debra Shults, director of Rescue 180, a local anti-substance abuse coalition, said she believes other convenience stores in the county and local cities are selling similar herbal concoctions.

"It's shocking to me that it's so readily available," she said. "Teens seem to know about it, but I'm not sure that parents do. We need to get the word out that this is a dangerous drug."



'Herbal incense' confiscated

Detective Lts. Kenneth Lodwick (left) and Kevin Bunch take inventory of hundreds of containers of hallucinogenic "herbal incense" seized at three local markets last week. Smoking pipes were also confiscated. (Staff Photo - Steve Marion)

School operating costs fall below ...

FROM PAGE 1

tant principal. Two and one-half support staff positions will need to be filled, including an office worker, custodian, and a half-time maintenance worker (shared with the freshman academy). The other 38 teaching positions and 11 support staff will come from personnel already employed at either Jefferson or Dandridge.

The total new cost for operations is estimated at \$292,500.

The cost of utilities at the two new schools will be offset by savings realized through abandonment of 26 portable units (52 classrooms) – now required at Jefferson, Dandridge and JCHS to house students.

Of that total, 34 classrooms are

rented by the school system, at an annual cost of \$129,234. Utilities for all 26 units cost \$123,900 a year, and insurance another \$6,444, bringing the total cost of maintaining portable classrooms to \$259,578.

That money will be saved once the two new schools open, but will not totally offset the cost of utilities in the new schools. After savings are subtracted, the freshman academy will realize a net savings of \$24,266 in utility costs, but Mount Horeb Elementary will require an additional \$51,860 to pay for utilities. That leaves a net increase in operational costs of \$20,874 for the two new facilities.

Dr. Edmonds did note that if County Commission funds the request for renovations and addi-

tions at JCHS, some of the portables will be used longer, so that construction crews can work on an entire pod at a time – speeding up the renovation process.

The director also addressed the method and cost of transporting freshmen students to the academy from JCHS – in the morning and at two points during the school day.

He proposes that all freshmen go to the high school initially each day, then board seven buses for the three-minute trip to the academy. Freshmen students taking ROTC or chorus during the first "block" of the day will be transported on one bus at the end of the period, and those taking ROTC or band during the fourth "block" will be transported back to the high

school, then leave from there for home.

Edmonds said the only cost for transportation between the two schools will be fuel, and that should be minimal. Existing personnel will be used as drivers.

County commissioners have requested that the board bring estimates on operating costs to the budget committee for review, which Edmonds said would be done later this month. County Finance Director Darrell Helton told the board that the budget committee may not have time to review the estimates at their November 21 session – which will only last 30 minutes – but he said it is his understanding the committee will call a meeting as soon as they can complete the review.

Rezoning next consideration for new school

BY DALE GENTRY
Standard Banner Editor

A rezoning plan required to populate the county's newest elementary school will come to school board in early spring.

Director of Schools Dr. Charles Edmonds told board members Tuesday that administrators are already working on plans and bus routes to fill Mount Horeb Elementary School, currently under construction on East Dumplin Valley Road. The school is slated for opening in the fall of 2012.

Most of the students going to the new school will come from Dandridge and Jefferson elementaries – currently the county's largest pre-K to grade five schools. Dandridge currently has an enrollment of about 830, while Jefferson is at 776.

About 600 total students will be rezoned to attend the school.

"This is not going to be a popular thing," Dr. Edmonds told the board. "I know we can't make everyone happy, but we're going to have to zone to make this work ... or it's not going to work."

Edmonds said he will present his recommendation on rezoning to the board in early spring, leaving adequate time to inform parents before school is out.

One tricky aspect of the rezoning puzzle will be redrawing

districts so that there is the right distribution of children, by grade, to initially populate the school – without having to hire additional teachers. "We're assuming the numbers will fall right when we do the zoning," the director said.

Your Local Weather

Thu 11/10	Fri 11/11	Sat 11/12	Sun 11/13	Mon 11/14
51/29	53/31	62/38	65/47	66/52
Mostly cloudy skies early, then partly cloudy in the afternoon. High 51F.	Abundant sunshine. Highs in the low 50s and lows in the low 30s.	Sunny. Highs in the low 60s and lows in the upper 30s.	Considerable cloudiness. Highs in the mid 60s and lows in the upper 40s.	Cloudy. Highs in the mid 60s and lows in the low 50s.

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FEATURED LISTING OF THE WEEK



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