



Everything Michigan

Belleville man accused of running lucrative marijuana grow operation

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Federal authorities charge that 22 people - including five from western Wayne and Washtenaw counties - ran a highly lucrative hydroponics marijuana growing operation in houses throughout southeast Michigan.

The indictment released Tuesday also seeks to forfeit the group's assets, estimated at \$8.2 million.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said in a statement that the alleged kingpin of the organization was Brian Osburn, 33, of Belleville. Documents charge that Osburn conspired with others to begin growing more than 1,000 marijuana plants in 2002.

The other area residents charged in the indictment include: Jason Eric Osburn, 34, of Belleville; Travor M. Osburn, 30, of Canton; Kathleen Leonita Osburn, 58, of Canton; and David Marcum, 31, of Ypsilanti. The other Osburns are Brian Osburn's two brothers and mother.

Over the course of several years, officials allege that the group grew "purps" marijuana - called that for the purple color of its buds and the tips of its leaves - at 24 different locations. Locally, several houses were allegedly used to grow marijuana, including a home on North Dixboro Road just outside Ann Arbor, a home on South Grove Road in Ypsilanti and four homes in Canton Township - on Belleville Road, Proctor Road and Roundtable Drive. They also are accused of using fields to grow marijuana in Rose Township and Southfield.

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The indictment describes a sophisticated operation in which the basements were used to grow the marijuana with grow lights, fans, fertilizer and space to hang and dry the cultivated plants.

The 22 people indicted face various charges: 11 were indicted for money laundering, and six were indicted on mortgage fraud charges. The U.S. Attorney's Office said many of the homes used for the indoor growing operations were purchased with drug proceeds, and several were bought by obtaining fraudulent mortgages.

Agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration seized \$25,000 in cash from the group on Nov. 16, according to the indictment. The government also is seeking to forfeit other assets and cash tied to the organization.

The case was investigated by the DEA and numerous other police agencies in Oakland and Wayne counties.

In a statement, Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard called the organization "a huge, ongoing, sophisticated criminal enterprise, which was very lucrative for the indicted individuals."

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