

State taking aim at doctor shopping

Drug monitoring program launched

By Bob Warren
St. Bernard bureau

Law enforcement authorities hope a new, statewide prescription drug monitoring program will curtail the practice of doctor shopping by drug addicts hoping to score narcotics.

And in so doing, they hope to ultimately reduce the number of people who die of accidental prescription drug overdoses.

Under the program, prescriptions are entered into a database that can be accessed by prescribers, dispensers and, in some cases, law enforcement agencies.

“The computer keeps track of the doctors, the patients and how many prescriptions they’re writing or having filled,” said St. Bernard Parish Sheriff Jack Stephens, whose department has handled numerous prescription drug overdoses in recent years. “This is really a big step forward. The monitoring program makes it harder to doctor shop.”

Malcolm Broussard, executive

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3 die in Tammany wrecks

From staff reports

Three people were killed in St. Tammany Parish within a day in two separate accidents, according to authorities.

A 43-year-old Slidell woman was killed Friday night and her passenger injured in a two-vehicle accident on U.S. 190 Business at Lindberg Drive.

Authorities believe that the woman, Marsha Scovotto, might have been impaired when she ran a stop sign and collided with another vehicle shortly before 7:30 p.m.

According to the State Police, Scovotto was driving her 1999 Ford Mustang north on Lindberg Drive when she failed to stop at the intersection with U.S. 190 and collided with an eastbound 2006 Chevrolet

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Police complaint numbers withheld

Information made public in years past

By Brendan McCarthy
Staff writer

As the FBI investigates several cases involving actions of New Orleans police officers, the city Police Department has declined to make public the number of complaints logged against officers in recent years.

Statistics on such complaints were traditionally displayed on the New Orleans Police Department’s Web site and were included in annual reports by the department. But sometime last year the public information was taken off the department’s site, and NOPD hasn’t responded to repeated requests for the statistics during the past month.

“We are working on that,” NOPD spokesman Bob Young said Friday regarding releasing the public information.

Such details shed light on the number and types of complaints

against police, as well as the total number of officers dismissed or suspended and the number of officers who resigned under investigation.

In mid-February, Young blamed the absence of the statistics on the Web site on a “technology” mishap, declining to elaborate. He said at the time that the data would be up on the site by the first week of March. As of Friday afternoon, the site had no such data.

“We are working on that too,” Young said Friday about the Web site.

Rafael Goyeneche, president of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, said citizen complaint and disciplinary statistics should be regularly made public, just as crime numbers and clearance rates are.

“I don’t know why we should wait for this information to be released, especially since it’s been available in previous administrations,” he said.

NOPD Assistant Superintendent Marlon Defillo, who previously ran the Public Integrity Bureau, which investigates police complaints, did not respond

to an e-mail sent weeks ago.

In 2006, the last year for which statistics were released, more than 800 complaints were filed. Of that number, 381 resulted in formal investigations. Nearly 200 complaints were sustained and 121 officers were suspended. Fifty-seven officers were fired and 48 retired or resigned under investigation.

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Soup of a day



On a Magazine Street balcony, Brian Nelson is a cabbage-catch kid as he receives a throw from the Eddie’s Cajuns float Saturday during the Irish Channel St. Patrick’s Day Parade.



Mike Lester of the Irish Channel Marching Club offers a cherry and a kiss to Xenia Rome.

It was a downright drenched Saturday, but that didn’t stop the Irish and Italian parades from rolling. Whether it was catching cabbage and carrots to make an Irish stew or celebrating St. Joseph, who in New Orleans is honored with altars awash in food, parade-goers went home full.



On Chartres Street, Devon Huntley gets a garter from a marcher during the Italian-American Marching Club’s St. Joseph’s Day Parade. Huntley, of Maine, is in New Orleans to volunteer in the rebuilding effort. Hundreds marched Saturday evening through the damp French Quarter, accompanied by 18 floats.

On Chartres Street, Devon Huntley gets a garter from a marcher during the Italian-American Marching Club’s St. Joseph’s Day Parade. Huntley, of Maine, is in New Orleans to volunteer in the rebuilding effort. Hundreds marched Saturday evening through the damp French Quarter, accompanied by 18 floats.



Tulane University student Sean McGuire, left, and Xavier University students Dominique Gabriel, center, and Kent Seals plant a tree Saturday.

Program branches out to Broadway

Hike for KaTREEna celebrates its 4,000th planting Saturday

By Ramon Antonio Vargas
Staff writer

Just as a downpour began pelting Broadway late Saturday morning, Elizabeth Chapoton drove a shovel into the ground and began digging. Grime streaked her face before the day ended. Mud caked her palms. Her black T-shirt and blue jeans sponged up gallons of water.

But after braving more than an hour of sometimes driving rain, Chapoton, 39, eventually planted a baby Southern magnolia tree in that hole.

It was one of 260 trees that she and about 300 other volunteers buried in the busy Uptown thoroughfare’s sidewalks and neutral ground.

The volunteers — mostly neighborhood residents and members of fraternities and sororities from Loyola and Tulane universities — were part of Hike for KaTREEna’s effort to resurrect

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DATA FILE

Q: What neighborhood in New Orleans has the highest concentration of Road Home buyouts?

A: Lower 9th Ward

Census tract area bounded by Florida Avenue and Forstall, Galvez and Tupelo streets

148 ROAD HOME BUYOUTS IN THIS AREA, AS OF JAN. 15

What is a census tract? A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision with a population between 1,500 to 8,000 people.

FLORIDA AVE.

LAW

500 feet

N. ROCHEBLAUE

ANDRY

CHOCTAW

FLOOD

CAFE'N AVE.

LAMANCHE

CHARBONNET

ALABO

ROFFIGNAC

BEYTON

MONTELELO

GORDON

TUPELO

FORSTALL

LZARDI

N. TONTI

N. MIRO

N. GALVEZ

LOUISIANA ROAD HOME PROGRAM

John Doe

Queen Charlotte's Landmark Tree Planting Ceremony

First Plant

PRE-KATRINA DEMOGRAPHICS OF THIS AREA

GENERAL

2,943 POPULATION

985 HOUSEHOLDS

32.8 MEDIAN AGE

\$20,625 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

RACE

Black: 99%

Other: 1%

GENDER

Male: 47%

Female: 53%

OWN/RENT

Vacant: 14%

Own: 52%

Rent: 34%

AGE

Over 64: 406 (14%)

Under 5: 240 (8%)

50-64: 383 (13%)

5-17: 657 (22%)

40-49: 415 (14%)

30-39: 353 (12%)

18-21: 211 (7%)

22-29: 278 (9%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Louisiana Land Trust

DATA ANALYSIS BY RICHARD RUSSELL, GRAPHIC BY DAN SWENSON / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE