

Grand Jury Final Report

The Honorable Cheryl Blackburn
Criminal Court, Division III

Davidson County, Tennessee
January 7, 2008 - March 20, 2008

Grand Jury Final Report

The members of this jury would like to thank Judge Cheryl Blackburn for the opportunity to serve on the Grand Jury of the Criminal Court of Davidson County for the January 2008 term. Under the experienced leadership of our foreman, Mr. Stanley Fossick, we were able to meet with experts, tour community agencies, and talk with agency representatives. This information proved to be invaluable as we made every effort to reach an informed decision on the 856 cases we were presented.

Onsite training and consultation by professionals

- District Attorney General Victor S. (Torry) Johnson, III from the 20th Judicial District presented the history, structure, and responsibilities of the Grand Jury
- Mikayla Matthews, assistant district attorney, provided law consultation, answers on individual cases, and gave us additional explanations as needed on the processes of the courts
- Capt. Todd Henry, commander of Special Operations Investigation Section, taught us the details of the illegal drugs on the streets
- Captain Rita Baker, commander of the Domestic Violence Division with Metro Police Department
- Chief Ronal Serpas of the Metro Nashville Police Department
- Mayor Karl Dean
- Frederick Hilliard, director, and Rusty Lawrence, executive director, from the residential self-help organization The Academy, an organization for substance abusers, ex-convicts and homeless individuals
- Sheriff Daron Hall from the Davidson County Sheriff's Office

Training at community sites

- Our tour of the Metro Police Training Academy gave us an in-depth look at the extensive training our officers complete before being commissioned. The academy grounds also house the Aviation Division and the Canine Unit. We would like to thank the following officers for demonstrating the talent of each of these departments: Sgt. James Johnson with Aviation; Officer Robert Brown, Officer Wilfred Hunter, Officer Joe Shelton, and (canine) Officer Memphis with the Canine Unit; Officer Ed Lawrence in hostage and negotiations training; and Officer Gilleland with SWAT training.
- Davidson County Drug Court with Judge Seth Norman and Janet Hobson, program director
- Riverbend Maximum Security Institution and the inmate run program called *Project: New Beginning*
- Davidson County's Office of the Medical Examiner with the Director of Human Resources, Bill Leftwich, and the Assistant Medical Examiner, Dr. Thomas Deering
- Juvenile Court of Nashville, Davidson County with Judge Betty Adams Green; Bob Ross, director; and Tim Adgent, court administrator
- Juvenile Detention facilities with Pat Curran, superintendent; Glenn Cook, assistant superintendent of security and operations; and Yolanda Hockett, assistant superintendent of programs
- Police Ride Alongs were done in various precincts by a number of the jurors.
- Metro Nashville Police Department's Crime Analysis meeting, or Compstat, directed by Deputy Chief Joey Bishop and Chief Serpas

We would first like to commend the wonderful men and women of the Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Police Department, or MNPd. As we have listened to many hours of

testimony from these officers we have learned just how caring, compassionate and dedicated these professionals are. Many of us take for granted the familiar blue lights flashing on the highways and byways, but as we drive past we have no idea what risks they are taking to protect and serve us.

Many citizens also do not realize that our dedicated police department has succeeded in dropping the major crime rate to the lowest number of incidences since 1989, even though there has been a 20 percent increase in Nashville's population. Furthermore, our police department has accomplished this while being under funded and understaffed. They have accomplished this by providing the highest level of professional law enforcement training for new recruits and the same high quality of in-service training for veteran officers.

MNPD's training academy also provides the same specialized training for the Vanderbilt University Police Department. Several of the Vanderbilt officers testified before the Grand Jury and we were impressed with their work and their willingness to work in tandem with Metro police officers. We suggest other police forces receive their training by utilizing MNPD's academy.

We encourage all citizens to help these and the other public servants of our community by becoming involved. We suggest a few of the following ideas.

- Call, write, or email your legislators and tell them you support the recently enacted "Crooks with Guns" law that ensures violent criminals serve their full sentence.
- Seek out an organization in the community to volunteer your services and be consistent in your commitment. A little time will go a long way.
- Thank a police officer, firefighter, teacher, community leader or anyone who serves the public. They often times hear our complaints, but not our appreciation.
- Support the efforts to hire additional officers so our police department will at least be staffed to the minimum standards for the population of our city.
- Get involved in holding down crime by reporting illegal activities you know are occurring or happen to witness. Check the Metro Police Department's website at <http://www.police.nashville.gov/> regularly to see if you can identify or know the location of wanted fugitives.
- Report drug activity in your area by calling 244-DOPE. You can remain anonymous.
- Begin or get involved with a Neighborhood Watch Program in your area.
- Don't drink or use drugs and drive. If you think you cannot afford a taxi, you will be unpleasantly surprised at the cost of a ticket for Driving Under the Influence, or DUI. Worse than getting a ticket is to be the cause of an accident that injures or kills you, someone you love, or an innocent citizen on the road.

DUI concerns

We are very concerned about the number of impaired drivers on our roads. Thanks to the efforts of our police department, the number of individuals arrested for Driving Under the Influence, or DUI, was up 32 percent in Davidson County in 2007. Yet, we know our officers were not able to locate every offender.

