



Media Alert

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BENNY N. NAPOLEON
Sheriff

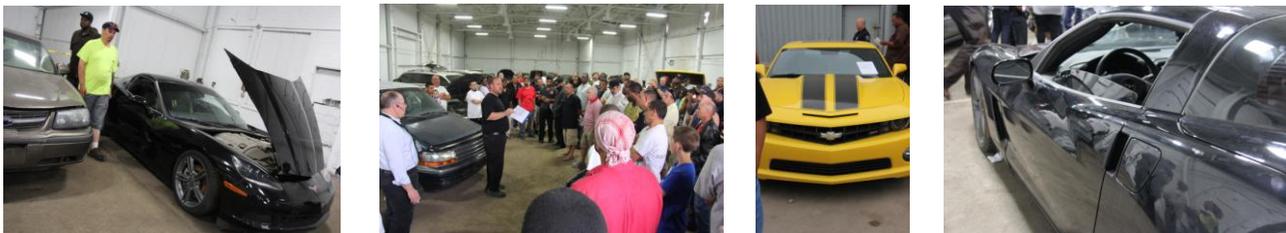
Contact: Paula Bridges 313.354.5223

For immediate release

Drag racers lose as bidders buy cars forfeited in Sheriff's crackdown

(June 4, 2014) Detroit—Drag racing used to be a summer tradition in Detroit. But a concerted effort by the Wayne County Sheriff's Office reclaimed the streets for the community last year.

On Wednesday, more than 100 bidders and spectators from metro Detroit checked out vehicles that were forfeited in an enforcement effort that began in 2011 and intensified in 2012 before the illegal racing virtually stopped by late summer 2013.



Sheriff's deputies issued numerous tickets and more than 30 vehicles were forfeited during the crackdown in Detroit. In March, the Michigan Court of Appeals upheld the right of police to confiscate vehicles used for drag racing. To date, about 25 of the forfeited vehicles have been sold at various auctions, including several cars sold today at an auction held at a Detroit storage yard. A 2008 Corvette brought the highest bid today: \$21,000. Seizing vehicles from racers and unruly spectators proved to be an effective and legal deterrent, said Wayne County Sheriff Benny N. Napoleon.

"We needed to send a clear message—No one wins drag racing in Wayne County," Napoleon said. "If you race, we will catch you and take away your car."

Napoleon said drag racers and spectators from throughout metro Detroit created a dangerous atmosphere in the community filled with illegal racing, alcohol sales, drug use and gunshots. Two civilians were killed and a police officer was shot and wounded. One undercover Sheriff's officer observed at least 20 races during the investigation, underscoring the extent of the danger. In one case, about 500 spectators loitered near a race site.

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The primary hot spots included the areas of McGraw and Grand River, Warren and Livernois and residential areas near Joy and Epworth and Fort and Woodmere. Races usually occurred on Friday and Saturday nights, often well into the early morning hours.

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office and the Detroit Police Department partnered with the Sheriff's Office in the drag racing initiative.

"Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy's resolve to protect victims of crime and to improve the quality of life within the county is unwavering," said Brian Moody, chief assistant prosecutor of the prosecutor's Forfeiture Unit. "Assisting the Wayne County Sheriff's Office by using the laws to abate the nuisance activity of drag racing is one of the many examples of the ways in which Prosecutor Worthy is committed to the safety of the people of Wayne County."

Said Detroit Police Chief James E. Craig: "We classify drag racing like we classify any other dangerous activity. It not only affects the occupants of the vehicle and on-lookers, but it affects the entire community. Lives have the potential to be lost and families broken. The recklessness of this crime is not to be taken lightly, nor are the consequences which are applied for offenders. It is a senseless and irresponsible crime."

Meanwhile, budget cutbacks have forced the closing of the Sheriff's unit that slowed illegal street racing.

A forfeited 2010 Chevy Camaro was displayed at the auction today as a reminder of the possible consequences of illegal street racing. A Macomb Township man who had unsuccessfully challenged the forfeitures in the Michigan Court of Appeals lost the Camaro after his son had driven it in a drag race.

The Camaro was not for sale at the auction. The Sheriff's Office is considering keeping the Camaro as part of its road patrol enforcement fleet.

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