

Jury convicts meth traffickers who operated in Central Oregon

U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams announced that a federal jury in Eugene has found two men guilty of trafficking methamphetamine from Southern California to Central Oregon and the Portland metro area for distribution.

On August 9, 2019, Ronald Wayne Thrasher, 49, of Madras, was found guilty of purchasing and transporting methamphetamine for distribution. Thrasher's supplier, Russell Marvin Jones, 53, of Gresham, was found guilty of selling methamphetamine and possessing a stolen firearm. Both men were also found guilty of being felons in possession of a firearm.

Thrasher and Jones have each served time in prison for past convictions. Thrasher served time in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm and Jones in Oregon state prison for first degree manslaughter.

Nine co-defendants have

previously pleaded guilty to conspiring with Thrasher to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine and are awaiting sentencing: Jordan Michael Johnson, 57, of San Diego, California; Brenda Ann Lederman, 46, of Santee, California; Jason James Puckett, 46, of Prineville; Tyler Wayne Fuller, 30, Renee Marie Scarlett, 48, and Talina Shantel Ortiz, 45, of Madras; Jacklin Renee Bowlby, 36, of Bend; Kerry Wayne Hopson, 33, of Redmond; and Mistie Dawn Cooper, 39, of Alfalfa. Fuller also pleaded guilty to robbing a bank in Madras.

According to court documents and testimony produced at trial, in spring of 2016, Thrasher became acquainted with multiple co-defendants who were engaged in trafficking methamphetamine from Santee, San Diego, and Portland for resale in Central Oregon. Thrasher used these connections to establish a

source of supply for his own use and distribution.

In early 2017, after his primary supplier was arrested in Redmond, an associate introduced Thrasher to Jones, a methamphetamine manufacturer, dealer and user in the Portland area. On or about February 17, 2017, Thrasher traveled to Portland with his associates to meet Jones. During this meeting, Jones sold Thrasher several pounds of methamphetamine. On March 20, 2017, after several additional methamphetamine deals, Jones sold Thrasher a stolen firearm.

By April 2017, Thrasher was distributing methamphetamine via multiple associates throughout Central Oregon. On April 9, 2017, he was introduced to new California-based methamphetamine suppliers including Stevens. Two weeks later, Thrasher and an associate drove to Santee to meet with his new suppliers.

During this meeting, Thrasher purchased approximately 13 pounds of methamphetamine from Stevens.

In May 2017, a Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) team investigation identified Thrasher as a high-volume methamphetamine supplier and distributor. On May 29, 2017, CODE detectives, assisted by a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, arrested Thrasher and seized approximately 16 pounds of methamphetamine, \$16,000 in cash, records of drug sales and the stolen firearm from his

residence in Madras.

Thrasher and Jones will be sentenced on February 4, 2020 and November 14, 2019, respectively, before U.S. District Court Judge Michael J. McShane.

This case was investigated by CODE; DEA; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; and the Oregon State Police. It was prosecuted by Frank R. Papagni Jr. and Judi Harper, Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon, with the assistance of the Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes county district attorney's offices.

VACCINATION:

Personal, informed care benefits decisions

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"They take newborns to Costco, a week old," Dr. Miller said. "We want to do whatever we want to do, regardless of what our bodies are designed to do."

Vaccinations are not just for children. Adults have the possibility of vaccinating against pneumonia, flu, shingles and other diseases.

Dr. Miller advocates mindful assessment of needs, risks and benefits. She says that she is an advocate of "purposeful" vaccination.

"Be in tune with what is

going on in our community," she said. "Protect yourself if you travel. I've seen some funny stuff coming back from Costa Rica."

By the same token, one should not live in fear of lurking disease.

"Don't go to the extreme of 'if I don't vaccinate against everything, I'm going to die!'" she said.

Dr. Miller throws up a caution flag of her own when it comes to pushes for vaccinations for diseases that can be avoided through lifestyle.

"How far should vaccines go?" she queries. "Should it be irresponsibility vaccines?"

Recent outbreaks of measles demonstrate that when rates of immunization drop, diseases that have been in

check can rear their heads again virulently.

People in Sisters are fortunate in that they have access to more individualized and personal healthcare and can make appropriate choices in consultation with a doctor who actually knows them.

That personal relationship is key, as far as Dr. Miller is concerned. She defined her stance on vaccination baldly: "I'm pro vaccination that is very personal. That's what I am."

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