

PRESS RELEASE

Re: 2001 Report
Spencer County Prosecutor's Office

The Spencer County Prosecutor's office just completed another busy year and files this annual report recapping the highlights of 2001. In 2001 we prosecuted more total misdemeanor and infractions cases (4,783) than ever before (up from 3,987 prosecuted in 2000). The office also tallied the most convictions ever and was at record levels for the number of search warrant requests made to recover stolen property and seize illegal drugs.

Additionally, the child support enforcement office of the Prosecutor's Office collected the most ever child support in Spencer County history in 2001 (well over \$1,000,000.00) and had the most ever open cases to work (Approximately 1,800 cases in 2001 compared to approximately 1,300 cases in 2000.) Criminal charges for the intentional failure to pay child support also continue to be filed at record levels. The Prosecutor's Office also filed the second highest amount of total felony cases (291) and second highest amount of felony drug cases (71) in Spencer County history. Only 2000's totals of 303 total felonies and 92 felony drug cases were higher.

The record number of convictions in 2001 included high profile cases such as State vs. Paul Kelley who received a 50 year sentence with 30 years executed for the armed robbery of a Chrisney, Indiana family and State vs. Michael Cannon who received a 17 year prison sentence for his involvement with drugs and his escape from the Spencer County Law Enforcement Center. Obviously, the murder in Dale received a lot of our attention in 2001 and that case will continue to be a priority for our office in 2002. Several drug dealing cases were resolved in 2001 with most of them resulting in six years executed prison sentences. The largest drug dealing sentence in 2001 was 18 years with 14 years executed.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's office new bad check program was started and collected over 150 bad checks totalling \$19,886.01 for local merchants and individuals (at no charge to them) and additional checks were collected through prosecution and deferral cases.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's office also filed drug forfeiture cases on \$9,672.04 in monies seized in drug arrests in 2001 by law enforcement. We requested the money be forfeited to the Spencer County Law Enforcement Fund. That fund was set up by the Prosecutor's office with approval from the Commissioner's to be used to pay for law enforcement equipment and expenses. In 2001 the "Operation Fight Back" anonymous tip line was set up and is paid for using monies from this fund. Also, the County Council approved monies from this fund for officer overtime pay on special projects to help supplement officer salaries and provide increased police presence especially on drug raid/sting operations. The "Overtime Against Crime" fund was recently used to help break up a drug ring at a raid in Grandview in which the alleged dealer had ties with Illinois and Evansville and resulted in federal charges against individuals in Illinois and state charges in our county.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's office teamed up with Sheriff LaVerl Uhde of the Spencer County Sheriff's Department and the Spencer County Solid Waste Management District to fight illegal dumping in Spencer County and our office set out new policies on how the cases are to be charged and made known our intention to require illegal dumpers to not only clean up their messes but also other trash by requiring them to do community service as part of their sentences.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's office in cooperation with the Spencer Circuit Court, Bethel Christian Center and Catholic Charities of Evansville supported the development of a program to allow churches and faith-based organizations to work with non-violent offenders as part of their

probation if the offender chooses to voluntarily enter the program to obtain rehabilitation and reintegration back into society using faith and the law as motivating factors.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's Office teamed up with the Spencer County Sheriff's Department and Sheriff LaVerl Uhde to co-found the first ever drug task force in Spencer County history. The task force is led by full-time Narcotics Officer, Kellie Reinke, of the Spencer County Sheriff's Department. The task force is made up of several different law enforcement agencies and meets regularly to organize drug and other crime information and to develop strategies against the illegal drugs being made, dealt, and used in our county.

In 2001 the Spencer County Prosecutor's office in cooperation with the Spencer Circuit Court concluded our first full year of running the Community Service Program as a County program. It was a successful year as 209 individuals (juveniles and adults) entered the program and were ordered to do 9,101 hours of community service without pay for Spencer County. Not only are the offenders not paid and have to work for free for governmental or not-for-profit agencies, but the offenders actually have to pay to be in the program. In 2001 the program generated \$18,523.62 from the offenders with another \$6,782.00 to come as accounts receivable. The program is designed to pay for itself and so far is performing very well. The offenders have been required to do everything from washing fire trucks and picking up trash along our highways to working for local communities at their fall festivals and is meant to be an alternative to jail and a way offenders can learn the importance of responsibility, and good work ethic while giving something positive back to their communities as a consequence for their offenses.

In 2001 the Prosecutor's Office "Keep Kids First" program was also active by providing intensive supervision for at-risk children by meeting with them and their families in the Prosecutor's office as well as by doing

alcohol and drug testing of certain at-risk youth to try to break the cycle of alcohol/drug dependency before they become adults. Also, as part of the "Keep Kids First" program, at the height of the Anthrax scares last October every elementary school student in Spencer County received a safety-tip bag at Halloween from our office reminding children to have their parents inspect their candy prior to eating it. We asked that the safety-tip bags be paid for with monies collected by the prosecutor's office from offenders (not county general taxpayer money).

In 2001 I also spoke at several community meetings, organizations, and churches in all parts of the county about topics ranging from domestic violence and methamphetamine manufacturing and prosecution to issues dealing with the importance of keeping our kids' safety and welfare a priority. I will be speaking to groups in Rockport and Dale this month and if anyone would like me to speak to their groups I am always willing to do so, calendar permitting.

The Prosecutor's office strongly supports the right of law enforcement to patrol and conduct investigations in Christmas Lake Village and I personally spoke to State Representative Russ Stillwell in 2001 about my support of special legislation to resolve that issue once and for all. Hopefully, the legislation will pass so that the health and safety of all families and children in Christmas Lake Village will no longer be unnecessarily jeopardized.

In 2001 the Prosecutor's office collected approximately \$120,000.00 from offenders and paid for the entire Prosecutor's Office Budget (including salaries, office space, and utilities) for the year 2001 out of the monies raised from offenders and not from county general, taxpayers monies. Similarly, our 2002 budget is budgeted to be paid for by offender monies and not county general, taxpayer monies. This allows the County to use its limited resources elsewhere as we make offenders pay for the cost of running

our office and its programs. Additionally, we have worked to secure over \$30,000.00 in grants per year for our office to be able to run the programs that we do at little, or no cost to the county. Offender monies were also used in 2001 to help sponsor a successful domestic violence training and educational seminar in Dale for law enforcement and other professionals.

Each year the Prosecutor's office has added new policies and programs. Starting the first of this year we expanded our office hours so that the Prosecutor's office is open at lunch (from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.) for the first time ever in Spencer County history. We hope the expanded hours will be more convenient for law enforcement and the public we serve. This year it is also our goal to expand our "Keep Kids First" program to add mentoring in cooperation with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southern Indiana, to restart the Serious Habitual Offenders Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP) using a secure website that is currently under construction for information sharing between agencies to intervene earlier with at-risk youth and make our schools and communities even safer, and to launch a responsible parenting initiative in cooperation with the County Purdue extension office to get fathers and mothers who are ordered to pay child support more involved in the lives of their children. We also hope to establish a formal domestic violence program, will keep attempting to secure funding for a victim's advocate, and will work with the child support office to reorganize and try to find even better ways to collect child support in a more timely manner.

A big "thank you" goes to the men and women of law enforcement and the staffs of the Prosecutor's Office, Child Support Enforcement Office, and the Juvenile and Community Service Program Offices whose hard work account for these accomplishments. I also want to thank County Circuit Court Judge Wayne Roell, City Court Judge Joe Alvey, the public, and all the other organizations and churches whose assistance and cooperation have helped lead to better law enforcement. Finally I want to thank those members of the

County Council and Commissioners who are progressive enough to allow us to try new approaches to prosecution, crime-fighting, and public safety, especially those that are meant to protect our children. We still have a lot of work to do to better serve the public but the Prosecutor's office will continue to work hard every day to make a difference for Spencer County families and children.

Jon A. Dartt
Spencer County Prosecutor