



**Warren C. Evans**  
*Sheriff*

# News Release

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## Task force cuts county's east side auto theft by 30%

- Most recent effort nets 13 arrests, recovers 18 vehicles worth \$260K

Officers from the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and the county's six east side communities teamed up last week to nab 13 suspected car thieves – some of them red-handed – and recovered 18 stolen vehicles worth more than \$260,000, contributing to a significantly lower auto theft rate in that region of the county, Sheriff Warren C. Evans announced today.

Since Evans assigned six deputies to establish the East Side ACTION Team in late January, local police chiefs in the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods communities are reporting a **30 percent overall reduction in auto thefts**. The creation of the task force was in response to a prior trend that showed across-the-board increases in reported stolen vehicles.



When comparing auto theft numbers from the last three months of 2006 with the first three months of 2007, Evans said, numbers are down significantly overall:

- Harper Woods – Down from 95 to 74
- Grosse Pointe – Down from 26 to 10
- Grosse Pointe Park – Down from 23 to 13
- Grosse Pointe Woods – Down from 11 to eight
- Grosse Pointe Farms – Up from six to eight
- Grosse Pointe Shores – No Change (no thefts reported)

“These numbers clearly indicate that our targeted, data-driven approach to reducing auto theft on the east side of Wayne County is working,” Evans said. Prior to the establishment of the task force, the east side communities were the only ones not covered by a regional auto theft investigative unit, such as Western Wayne Auto Theft, Detroit Commercial Auto Theft, and the Downriver Auto Theft Team.

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This recent effort by the East Side ACTION team – which stands for Arresting Car Thieves In Our Neighborhoods – involved extensive surveillance at locations car thieves are known to target. Several undercover officers were stationed in key areas and able to alert arrest teams of a suspected stolen car.

“This is an important initiative because it is proactive,” Evans said. “We are not responding to the report of a stolen vehicle. Often we are finding them still occupied by the suspect before the vehicle even has been reported stolen.”

Among the suspected thieves was a 19-year-old Detroit man who was arrested by ACTION officers while driving a 2007 Jeep Cherokee worth nearly \$40,000. Investigators believe the vehicle may have been stolen directly from the plant or a dealership as the vehicle had blank and missing federal certification stickers and no record of the vehicle ever being sold could be found. The suspect has been released pending further investigation but likely will face charges.

Evans said each of the suspects has been thoroughly interviewed in an effort to learn more about organized theft rings that may be operating in the area. “Intelligence gathered from this investigation already is helping police departments in Wayne and Macomb counties solve more than a dozen previous auto-theft related crimes.”

According to one local police chief, the increased auto theft effort also has resulted in an additional benefit.

“During the time that that the ACTION team has been up and running, overall crime is down in my city,” said Grosse Pointe Park Police Chief David Hiller. “I can’t definitively connect the two, but based on my experience I know the increased presence of these officers has made a difference.”

The East Side ACTION team investigates reports of any auto theft that has a connection to the east side communities. That may be from where the vehicle was stolen or where it was recovered. Local partners in the task force and supplementing the six sheriff’s deputies with officers of their own are:

- Harper Woods – Chief Randolph Skotarczyk
- Grosse Pointe – Chief James Fox
- Grosse Pointe Park – Chief David Hiller
- Grosse Pointe Farms – Chief Dan Jensen
- Grosse Pointe Woods – Chief Mike Makowski
- Grosse Pointe Shores – Steven Poloni

“Auto theft is one of those crimes that has a negative affect on a community’s quality of life,” said Harper Woods Police Chief Randolph Skotarczyk, whose city has been hardest hit by car thieves in recent years. “This sustained effort is doing a great deal to eliminate auto theft as a community problem in our area of Wayne County.”