



# The I-70 Scout

Searching for news in Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers, Deer Trail, and Agate

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## 'Burger busted in reefer raid

**KATHY SMILEY**  
Staff Writer

**BRIGHTON** — A house in Strasburg, one of 25 houses in multiple Colorado communities, was raided by law enforcement officials Jan. 25 in Operation Sweet Leaf, which took down a large marijuana cultivation and distribution ring.

Warrants were issued for 16 individuals, 13 of whom have been arrested. A total of 69 criminal charges are contained in the arrest warrants. Joe Smith of Strasburg was indicted on several counts including racketeering, money laundering and possession with intent to distribute marijuana.

According to the indictment, 13 named individuals including Smith "and other persons known or unknown" were involved in a criminal enterprise with a primary objective to illegally grow, process and package marijuana in various residences in numerous counties in Colorado and to sell or distribute it to customers within and outside the state.

Seven of the individuals, including Smith, "each maintained an illegal marijuana growing operation at properties rented or owned by them," according to the indictment. "These members of the enterprise assisted in working and maintaining all of the enterprise's growing operations including the storage of marijuana for the purpose of distribution."

At a Jan. 27 press conference, 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney Don Quick said that the operation, the culmination of a 10-month investigation of the 16 people, involved multiple agencies — local, state and federal agencies from the state of Colorado and law enforcement agencies outside of the state.

"In fact, this investigation started when local authorities were contacted by law enforcement from another state which had seized a large amount of marijuana, and the evidence came back that it came from the state of Colorado," Quick said, adding that 90 percent of the marijuana targeted in the investigation was distributed outside of the state.



KATHY SMILEY/The I-70 Scout

A photo taken in a room in one of the grow houses hit in a recent raid on a marijuana grow and distribution operation shows around 75 plants under cultivation. Over 2,700 plants were seized in the 25-house raid, as well as around 147 pounds of dry marijuana, 40 guns and a large amount of U.S. currency and Iraqi dinars.

The 25 houses raided included the one in Strasburg, four in Brighton, four in Thornton, three in unincorporated Adams County, three in Broomfield, four in Denver, and one each in Commerce City, Northglenn, Westminster, Frederick, Erie and Breckenridge. At one of the houses, two medical marijuana licenses for two individuals were produced, and they had 25 plants. No arrests or seizures occurred there.

Items seized in the raid included 40 guns, 2,749

marijuana plants, 147.55 pounds of dry marijuana, more than \$278,500 in U.S. currency, five silver bars, and 15 million Iraqi dinars.

Cmdr. Jerry Peters of the North Metro Drug Task Force reported multiple pounds of the marijuana that had been transported out of state were also seized. Other states involved include California, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Texas.

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## Corridor charity looking for a fiscal lift

**KATHY SMILEY**  
Staff Writer

**BENNETT** — A foundation that has assisted countless I-70 Corridor individuals and organizations and enhanced the local quality of life for 17 years is now in need of a hand up itself.

Since 1995, the High Five Plains Foundation, serving Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers and Deer Trail has awarded scholarships to Corridor youth, provided grants for worthy projects, and offered emergency and victims' assistance to individuals in need. Although people may have heard of the organization, many do not know how deep its roots are in local communities and how the lives of nearly everyone who lives here have been enhanced, in some way, by its work.

The High Five Plains Foundation's accomplishments include providing a grant to start the Bennett Parks &



KATHY SMILEY/The I-70 Scout

High Five Plains Foundation founders Frank and Patty Doyle and foundation accountant Sheila Cooper, right, pose in front of the Muegge house in Bennett. The foundation, which has served the Corridor for 17 years, is in need of volunteers and donations so its work can continue.

Recreation District. It helped found the I-70 Corridor Regional Economic Advancement Partnership and was instrumental in getting a branch of Plains Medical Center in Strasburg, and in bringing access to Pickens Technical

College and Morgan Community College to Corridor students.

The Angels of the Corridor, which collects Christmas gifts for needy families each year was started with a High Five grant. The foundation was a partner in the purchase of the historic Muegge house in Bennett, was instrumental in its designation as a historical site, and gave the Bennett Historical Society a grant to preserve the 1917 farmhouse.

The many grants awarded over the years include one to Prairie Creeks Living Center in Strasburg to extend its dining area. Donated playground equipment was awarded to Deer Trail for Centennial Park. Music stands were provided for the Byers School instrumental music program, and the school also received funds for a reading program. The Comanche Crossing Horsemen's Association was awarded a grant to help put on a charity ride for

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