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The Team Angels participated in the Run Drugs Out of Town 5K Run and Walk in Fraser July 18. The event was a fundraiser organized by Families Against Narcotics to spread awareness of and support for addiction problems in the community.

Action group, cops fight drugs in Fraser

By Heidi Roman
 C & G Staff Writer

FRASER — A group of residents and community leaders in Fraser don't run away from their problems, but they do run their problems out of town.

The Families Against Narcotics club, known as FAN, is building steam to fight off drug problems that have troubled the community and surrounding area.

The FAN club held its first annual Run Drugs Out of Town 5K Run and Walk July 18, which raised awareness and several thousand dollars for its efforts to help people with addictions. The success of the event comes on the heels of local law enforcement agencies' Operation Smack Down II, which netted 114 arrests, most of which were drug related, and led to the seizure of massive amounts of drugs.

Lt. George Rouhib, acting director of the Fraser Public Safety Department, said there's no question drugs are a problem — not only in Fraser but also in all of Macomb County. The department worked with 19 other local law enforcement agencies for the operation, which targeted know drug houses in Detroit in early June. People from 22 different jurisdictions were arrested in the three-day sting.

"It took six weeks to obtain all of the intelligence on heroin houses in Detroit," Rouhib said.

The agencies conducted 16 search warrants. They seized two firearms, 45 vehicles, 89 grams of heroin, 27 grams of crack cocaine, 38 grams of cocaine, 240 grams of

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marijuana, 236 Vicodin pills and 29 Xanax pills, Rouhib said.

All of the arrests and warrant searches were done in Detroit, but the suspects live all over metro Detroit. Two of those arrested are Fraser residents and five are from Clinton Township.

“People come from different locations to Detroit to purchase heroin and drugs,” Rouhib said. “It goes to show, this isn’t just a single community’s problem. It’s a widespread problem.”

Families Against Narcotics was created to help address that problem. The all-volunteer group was formed in 2007 in response to a spike in drug overdoses and deaths of young people in the community.

The group is working to educate local parents and students, and to simply offer an ear to anyone experiencing problems with drug use, either themselves or someone they know.

Fraser resident Debby Winowiecki said the group has made a world of difference in her life. Her 22-year-old son is an addict in recovery, and the group has helped her cope with what the family is going through.

“We were struggling and very alone,” Winowiecki said. “We had been lost and depressed, not knowing where to turn.”

Now she’s an active member of FAN, and is helping the group make an impact. Last summer, the club hosted two softball game fundraisers, and it is planning another one for September. They had a booth at the Fraser City Picnic July 19, and Winowiecki estimates the club talked to more than 100 people about their goals and how to seek help.

“We’ve touched so many lives and the numbers in our group are growing,” she said.

The group also had a bigger-than-expected turnout for its Run Drugs Out of Town 5K Run and Walk, with more than 300 people participating. Public Safety officers helped direct runners and walkers and set up a route for the event, which ended at Fraser High School.

“It was a beautiful day and the route was nice,” Rouhib said. “We had people from all over the place sign up, and everybody had a good time.”

The money raised will support the FAN club’s efforts.

“We’ll use it for literature and educational things,” Rouhib said. “We’ll use it to help families with addiction issues.”

Runners and walkers could register as individuals or in groups, and some people signed up to walk in the name of a loved one. Winowiecki’s team was called Team Angels, because she believes her son has an angel watching out for him. Fraser’s CARE agency had a team of participants, and another team called Promises2Ryan was formed in memory of Ryan Rudolph, a former Fraser High School student who died of a heroin overdose in 2007. His father, Mark Rudolph, was a founding member of the FAN club.

More information about FAN is available on its newly launched Web site, <http://familiesagainstnarcotics.org>.

FAN meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month at Christ United Methodist Church, located at 34385 Garfield Road, south of 15 Mile Road in Fraser. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. and are open to everyone.

C & G Sports Writer Jon Malavolti was a participant in the Run Drugs Out of Town 5K as part of a series on summer running. To read more about training, check out his blog at <http://candgnewssports.blogspot.com/>.

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