Fall 2004

Methamphetamine in Tennessee

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Appendix E - UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: Matt Whitaker

College: Communication
Department: Journalism & Electronic Media
Faculty Mentor: James A. Casadevall

PROJECT TITLE: Methamphetamine in Tennessee

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: James A. Casadevall, Faculty Mentor

Date: Dec 7, 2004

General Assessment - please provide a short paragraph that highlights the most significant features of the project.

Comments (Optional): See attached sheet.
General Assessment

Senior Project by Matt Whittaker

Dec. 7, 2004

Matt has reported and written a comprehensive story about the methamphetamine problem in East Tennessee. It’s a complex problem and he has approached it from several sources to come to grips with its impact on the Upper Cumberland area in Tennessee.

He has completed good interviews with law enforcement officials from several counties in the region. Most compelling is his interview with a former meth “cook” and her family in their home in Putnam County.

As a reporter with a camera, he has provided a richer account of the meth problem as it has been confronted by rural county sheriffs and state agencies. The captions presented with the photographs are a major part of the story.

The draft of the story Matt has presented today has some problems and would require some additions and revisions before it would be ready to present for publication in a newspaper or magazine.

If I were a managing editor, I would ask Matt to return for additional interviews with Charlotte Sanders, the meth user who went through rehabilitation and now appears to be living successfully with her family. The drug paraphernalia and chemical recipes presented early in the story need to be connected to the reformed user to show more clearly how lives can be destroyed and restored.

This good reporting could probably be presented to readers best in a series of stories that would show the approaches of various state and local agencies as they work in what they term the hardest hit region of the Southeast. The rural/urban dimension of the story would need to be addressed to make their claims believable.

In my judgment, Matt has done a fine job of reporting a difficult story. Just getting the law officers and others to talk to him on the record is a major accomplishment. The photographs add authenticity to the story. He has met all of the requirements of a senior honors project with this manuscript and photographs.

James A. Crook, Ph. D.
Professor and Interim Director
To whom it may concern:

Do not archive or publish this project or any of its parts in any form without consent of the author and photographer, Matt Whittaker.

This is a work of journalism, and I would like to try to sell it to a publication. Some publications will not publish a work if it has previously been published.

Thank you,

Matt Whittaker
(865) 406-4232
Methamphetamine in Tennessee

Text and photographs by Matt Whittaker
The “devil drug” comes to Tennessee

Methamphetamine production and abuse has reached epidemic proportions and catapulted the Volunteer State to No. 1 for lab seizures in the Southeast and the top five in the country, all the while drawing in the most innocent of victims

Betsy Dunn’s job is becoming increasingly dangerous. Her line of work takes her into homes that could contain toxic fumes and violent and paranoid owners — or the buildings could even explode.

But she is not a firefighter, police officer or hazardous materials worker. She is a case manager for the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, and she is increasingly having to face what some children in Tennessee live with every day: the dangers of methamphetamine production.

“When I knock on a door, I don’t know what’s behind it,” she says. “It’s the worst form of child endangerment I’ve seen, and I’ve worked frontline 15 years. I call it the devil drug.”

As of September, in Dunn’s 11-county area in the Upper Cumberland region — one of the areas of the state hardest hit by the meth problem, what some call a statewide epidemic — 92 children have been placed in state custody because their parents have been either making or using meth. Last year, the number was 179, and the year before it was 123.

She says the region has been dealing with the problem for five or six years and that it is on the rise in her area.

“It’s just hovering over the Upper Cumberland area,” she says. “Meth is part of my everyday vocabulary.”

But it was not always so.

While the traumatic effects of methamphetamine on children — who often are taken from their homes, decontaminated on the spot, taken to the hospital and are forced to leave behind blankets and toys which are contaminated and must be destroyed — may be some of the most poignant effects of the meth problem, they are only a small part of how far the drug reaches into society.

In 2000, approximately 230 meth labs were seized in Tennessee, according to Harry Sommers, the assistant special agent in charge of Tennessee. That number has skyrocketed to around 1,400 this year.

“It’s clearly a huge problem,” Sommers said. “It’s such a high rate of increase year after year.”

Tennessee ranks in the top five for meth lab busts in the United States, he says, and “there’s no doubt” that Tennessee ranks No. 1 for meth lab seizures in the southeastern region of Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and Florida. The state now accounts for 75 percent of the meth labs seized in this area, according to the agency.

Since 2003, there has been a 200 percent increase in meth labs in the Southeast, and Tennessee has accounted for 90 percent of that increase, according to Army National Guard Col. Bill Hartbarger, the military counter-drug coordinator for the state.

Even though the epidemic proportions of the problem are only a few years old in Tennessee, the problem
has now brought in government agencies from the National Guard to the DEA, rural sheriff’s offices and even the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

“This is an epidemic,” says McMinn County Sheriff Steve Frisbie, whose department now averages one meth bust a day. “It’s so easily made. It’s so easy to get a hold of. You see it in all ages, in all types of people. It’s not just one caliber of people.”

Meth has been called the “poor man’s cocaine,” but Frisbie says it’s not just used by lower income folks. “It seems to be the drug of choice” in McMinn County, he says.

Since 2002, there have been at least 148 meth lab busts in the county, and a special mobile meth response truck based in Chattanooga has responded to them to help with the cleanup. Because cleaning up a meth lab can cost between $2,500 and $15,000, according to Frisbie, this federal help is crucial to the process. “The county, our budgets could not afford it,” he says.

Frisbie has four officers who are certified to enter meth labs. People found in meth labs are decontaminated on the scene with soap and water, but Frisbie has also had a special shower facility installed behind his office where suspects are washed further so that they don’t expose other inmates and corrections officers to the hazardous chemicals — many of which are common household products like starter fluid, alcohol and cold tablets — used in the meth production process. The shower was completed last fall and was funded by money seized in drug arrests. It has a drainage system that stores contaminants washed from suspects in a nearby metal vat marked “Danger: chemical storage.”

Biohazard bags are also used to dispose of discarded items.

The children who come from these environments, Frisbie says, are “exposed to the same surroundings as the adults.”

Inside the Athens, Tenn., sheriff’s office, McMinn County Sheriff’s Department drug agent B.J. Johnson opens an evidence locker and removes bottles of chemicals and packets of meth crystals that the department has seized. The liquids contain Coleman fuel and other chemicals and are what meth looks like before it is brought down to a powder. Johnson deposits on a desk a pile of blue plastic bags, each about the size of a Zippo cigarette lighter, that contain the finished product. “This is pure ice,” Johnson says of the white crystals shaped roughly like small grains of rice. Each bag can sell for up to $100, depending on weight. The street price for meth is $100 a gram, he said.

Johnson is certified by the DEA to enter meth labs, but he says the number of busts is wearing on him.

The “first couple times it’s pretty cool, but now it sucks,” he says. “All the labs are about the same. They’re just nasty ... (with a) chemical smell, like going into some chemical building, factory.”

It takes eight to 16 hours to clean up an average meth lab, Johnson says, and it’s a pain to put on the protective suits and tape them up to seal the seams. Then a hazardous materials team has to get there, and then there’s the paperwork, decontaminating suspects in the shower facility, charging them and then more paperwork.

Sommers of the DEA says meth is “essentially a rural phenomenon” because it requires anonymity and space for chemicals that produce an odor, but Anderson County Sheriff Bill White
says it is not just a backwoods problem. In Anderson County, which like McMinn County has rural, wooded areas, White says they have found meth labs in motel rooms. “It’s not a rural problem,” he says. “It’s everybody’s problem.”

When asked what are the most extreme meth lab cases they have seen, White and Chief Lewis Ridenour say one was a house in Oliver Springs, Tenn., that caught fire. Two other labs, however, were found at a senior center in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and a Key Springs, Tenn., nursing home. Ridenour says those most vulnerable to the dangers of meth are the young and the elderly.

White says the easiest meth seizures come when the lab or lab remainders are discarded on the side of the road. That’s where the Tennessee Department of Transportation comes in.

One might not think road workers would be drafted for a war on drugs, but because meth labs can be created with household appliances and chemicals, they can be small and portable. Sometimes “cooks” get spooked and meth labs or their component chemicals are discarded on the side of the road, posing a danger to passersby and workers who are more used to inspecting bridges, cleaning up trash and maintaining traffic signs. Transportation workers might also come across a meth cook, many of which manufacture the drug to feed their own habit, which can lean to paranoid, delusional and dangerous behavior. Many are armed.

So the Army National Guard has begun holding training seminars for TDOT employees on what meth is and the dangers it poses both to users and others who come in contact with the chemicals used to produce it. TDOT bridge inspectors in West Tennessee discovered two functional meth labs and turned them over to authorities.

In October, more than 300 TDOT employees were trained in Knoxville, and at the Army National Guard and Marine Corps base in Gray, Tenn., more than 130 attended seminars on Oct. 18. Chattanooga- and Nashville-area employees were scheduled to be trained this month.

At the meeting in Gray, Junior Martin, a 45-year-old highway maintenance worker from Sneedville, Tenn., who has been with the department for three years, said that about a year and a half ago he found a five-gallon container of acid, bleach and another fluid. He thought someone had wrecked and left the chemicals there, so he cleaned them up and threw them away.

It was not until several months later that he was talking about it with a supervisor, who said it was probably a meth lab.

“We didn’t know then,” Martin said. “They say the fumes off that stuff’ll kill you. It’s a dangerous thing, finding labs.”

The training sessions in Gray, which lasted for about an hour and 15 minutes each, were led by Col. Bill Hartbarger and Sgt. Major Deborah Rose-Spangler of the Army National Guard.

“We’ve got a lot of wars going on,” Hartbarger told the TDOT employees during one of the sessions before Rose­Spangler began a slide and video presentation. “We’ve been fighting this war on drugs (for a while). Meth scares me. We can go into Afghanistan. We can go into Iraq. We are forbidden to go into meth labs” because it’s too dangerous. Only certified individuals are allowed to enter known meth labs because of the dangers.
He told the TDOT workers: “If you haven’t already come in contact with it, you will come in contact with something relating to meth.”

Authorities have busted three “super labs” capable of producing more than 100 pounds of meth in one batch, Rose-Spangler said, but the majority of labs raided in Tennessee are smaller in scale and easily moved. People can cook meth in a lab while traveling down the road, possibly in a trailer, she said.

“If you’re out on the highway and see a cooler, don’t be jamming your hands down in there because you don’t know what’s in there—not anymore,” she told the workers. “I don’t want you to end up like this guy.”

She showed a picture of a man burned after walking into a meth lab and turning on the lights.

Chemicals used in the production of methamphetamine can produce toxic and flammable gasses, and the labs are prone to explode. Sometimes paranoid “cooks” even set booby traps.

She also showed pictures of meth lab accidents where houses had exploded and people were burned who were not always the cooks.

“These people do not care about their children at all,” Rose-Spangler said. “Their kids are crawling around in toxic crap.” (She also added that in the production of one pound of meth, about five to six pounds of hazardous waste are produced.)

Hartbarger told the story of a woman in Chattanooga who said to him: “I’ve got to give up meth, or I’ve got to give up my son, and I just can’t give it (meth) up.”

Based on regional counts from April, May and June, the Department of Children’s Services estimates it will remove approximately 700 children from their homes by the end of the year because their parents or caretakers were making or using meth, according to department spokeswoman Andrea Turner. Because the meth problem in Tennessee is a relatively recent phenomenon, sharply increasing over the past few years, the department has only just this year begun to collect statistics on the number of children removed specifically in meth investigations. After the three-month regional count, the department put a system in place in October to track the numbers. Turner did not provide statistics from October and November.

“We have just begun to collect that data,” Turner said. The problem “wasn’t significant in previous years. It’s come on very quickly for us to just now start tracking it.”

There are approximately 10,000 children under DCS care. The number of children brought in because of meth investigations “makes up a small percentage, but it’s gaining prominence,” Turner said. The numbers coming in because of meth are “increasing dramatically.”

She said the increase could be seen from the numbers from April through June and the statistics generated starting in October as well as anecdotal information from individual case managers.

She said most of the children — 185 between April and June — are coming from the 14-county Upper Cumberland region, which includes the counties where Dunn works. The Upper Cumberland region has been dealing with the problem longer than anywhere else in the state, Turner said.

“Their parents, the only thing in life is the dope,” says Cumberland County...
Sheriff Butch Burgess. “The kids take care of themselves.”

As of October, Burgess says, his county alone had 120 children in foster care and “probably 70 percent of them goes back to meth abuse,” although he said he did not have hard statistics.

Burgess and his wife, Vickie, have fostered more than 30 children in a decade. He currently is fostering a five-year-old boy whose mother tested positive for meth after the child was removed from her care.

In addition to the dangers of living in an atmosphere of toxic fumes and the potential for explosion, the effects of growing up in a home where meth is produced and used can be long-term and traumatic for children, Burgess says. Many exhibit attachment disorders. “If a child has not bonded at an early age with an adult, they’re always going to have problems doing it,” he says. “Most of these kids can’t handle any kind of change.”

Children growing up in that kind of atmosphere cannot invite friends over or go out a lot “because the parents are so paranoid. They’re afraid they’re going to tell,” Burgess says. And because the parents are afraid their children will give them away to teachers or the teachers will catch on to problems with the children, the parents sometimes make the child change schools. The children can exhibit bruises from physical abuse, smell like meth or the chemicals used to make it or show a sudden drop in grades. Sometimes one child may take on parental roles to take care of other siblings. The parents generally do not pay attention to their children’s hygiene, he says.

Many of these children show high rates of learning disabilities and have a hard time controlling their emotions, he says.

“That’s stuff that can be overcome if you get them early and work with them,” he says. “Give them an opportunity to be a normal child.”

In her Department of Children’s Services office in Cookeville in Putnam County, Betsy Dunn, the Upper Cumberland case manager, has a pile of bottles, blankets, clothes and diapers donated by community members for so-called “meth orphans” who can lose everything they have known when their parents are arrested for making or using meth.

“The children, they truly are the innocent victims,” she says, adding that she has seen a 7-year-old who knows how to make meth step by step and another who was the primary caretaker of parents and younger siblings. As she talks of the neglect that she’s seen — “children living in absolute filth, children that are basically fending for themselves” — her eyes well up with tears. “It just hurts my heart to no end. These children are living in gas chambers. They could blow up at any minute. Children don’t belong in the world of methamphetamines. Leave the children out of it for God’s sakes.”

But even though their living conditions can be squalid, removing a child from that environment can be traumatic. The children coming out of meth houses are decontaminated on the spot and cannot take blankets or toys with them. These items have to be destroyed because of toxic contamination. And then the children have to face a visit to the hospital.

“They lose their parents,” Dunn says. “They lose that blanket. They lose that teddy bear. They lose everything. They have to start over.”
On top of that, when the children go to the emergency room for a medical examination they can experience more fear. “Just imagine that,” Dunn says. “What’s the biggest thing that you feared going to the doctor as a child? Shots.”

In June, while Dunn was at the hospital with three children taken from a meth lab, she said she had an 8-year-old girl sitting on her lap. She asked if she was going to get a shot, and Dunn tried to change the subject. The girl said she couldn’t get shots because she was afraid of needles. Dunn told her these shots didn’t hurt. When the hospital worker came around and asked who was going to go first, the child said she would go first, but Dunn offered instead. The girl asked if it hurt, and Dunn said no even though she was “dying.” Then the 8-year-old said she could go, and Dunn held her hand.

It “was probably the biggest needle I’ve ever seen,” says Dunn, who also confesses to being afraid of shots. “If I have to be stuck every time that these children are placed in this situation, I will.”

In July 2002, Gov. Bredesen signed into law a civil statute amending the “definition of severe child abuse to include knowingly allowing a child to be present where methamphetamine is being manufactured.” Dunn says the law has not really affected the number of children taken into state custody because of meth. She says that not every child removed from a meth lab is a severe abuse case. That has to be proved, and severe child abuse is only one of the grounds for termination of parental rights. In any case, she says, parents are allowed to work toward reunification with their children.

“People do get their children back,” she says. “It’s not very often in these cases.”

Charlotte Sanders is one of the rare exceptions—not only because she got her two daughters back but because she has “been clean” for three years after using the drug for almost a decade. Most meth addicts, even with rehab, are never able to shake the habit, and their life expectancy is generally less than 10 years.

“I’m only the second person in this area who has been on meth and gotten off meth and got their kids back and gotten straight,” Sanders says.

She now lives with her husband, John Sanders, and her two daughters from a previous marriage, Amber Greenlee, 12, and Ashley Greenlee, 14, in their home in Cookeville.

On an evening in mid-November she sits in her living room, laughing and talking with her family as Amber reads a Cosmo Girl magazine while sitting on a couch with John. They sometimes hold hands. Ashley sits in a recliner near Amber and the two middleschoolers whisper and giggle and sometimes playfully poke each other. They all seem happy together in this comfortable house in Putnam County. “Life is just great, now,” Sanders says.

But Sanders says she could not have imagined this three years ago.

“I was a dope cook,” Sanders says. “When you’re on that dope, until you get ready to quit, you can be pushed and pushed. As much as I loved my kids ... I couldn’t quit. I had no control.”

She says she has also done cocaine and heroine, “but I had never had something take control of me like this. This is the worst drug in the United States — or the world.”
Amber and Ashley, then 9 and 11, were taken from her by the state and sent to Sander’s mother.

Sanders says she would make the drug in her house, in apartments or abandoned homes, even in tree houses out in the woods or at campsites. “Sometimes that’s safer than anywhere else,” she says.

“All you’ve got to have is a burner,” Sanders says. “Even a cigarette lighter in a van” to hook a one-eye burner up to.

“My children know more about it than my husband does now,” she says.

When the girls were taken into state custody, Ashley tested positive for meth because of the fumes from the production process, which according to Sanders, can seep into plastic cookware. “It was right by where I was cooking my food,” Ashley says.

Meth houses are “nasty,” Sanders says. “There were clothes where you couldn’t even walk on the floor. The girls did their own cooking.” All she ever did was make meth and get high, she says, to which Amber responds: “Exactly.”

The house “smelled really strong … like fingernail polish remover,” Ashley says. “It was gross.”

And Sanders says that was “not even the gas fumes. That’s cooking down the pills.” She says she would soak pills, like Sudafed, in alcohol to get one of the key ingredients in meth production, either ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, which can be found in over-the-counter cold tablets. The smell could also come from using acetone to separate red phosphorous from match strikers. The chemical is another ingredient in meth production, and his process is called “pulling red.” She says the smell of cooking meth is like rotten eggs.

Amber says the girls missed school “a bunch of times,” but Ashley adds, “we made good grades.”

Sanders says she would sometimes wake up late coming off a meth “run,” and “teachers got suspicious” with the girls coming in late. They would make up excuses, Ashley says, but they wouldn’t tell the real reasons for their tardiness because they were afraid their parents would get into trouble.

Ashley says there were people in and out of their house at all hours and that there was yelling, and her sister says it was hard to get to sleep at night because of the talking.

Despite these troubles that many of their peers didn’t face, the girls are, after all, still kids. And their predicament did provide some advantages.

“It really wasn’t that bad,” Ashley said. “You got to do whatever you wanted. We used to get grounded and could blow it off, but now we get grounded and stay that way.”

Cumberland County Sheriff Butch Burgess says the life expectancy of a meth cook is usually only about five to seven years. He says that of those who are in drug rehabilitation programs for 18 months to two years only between 6 percent and 12 percent stay off the drug for an additional two years.

“I’ve been clean for three years,” Sanders says, although the attributes her recovery to putting her faith in Jesus Christ rather than the year of intensified outpatient rehab she went through, which “didn’t do a bit of good.” Rehab, for her, was a place to reminisce about drugs. “That’s where I got some of my best contacts,” she said.
Anderson County Sheriff Bill White at his desk in his Clinton, Tenn., office.

Anderson County Sheriff Bill White.
White shows a page from the final report of The Governor's Task Force on Methamphetamine Abuse, released in September by Gov. Phil Bredesen's office. The images on this page in the booklet show a meth addict's physical degradation over several years. The task force was created in April to help provide a "basis for a comprehensive strategy to address the methamphetamine epidemic in Tennessee," according to the report. It included law enforcement, state and local government, healthcare and retail personnel.
At her home in Cookeville, Tenn., Charlotte Sanders, a former meth addict and cook, with a mug shot of her from when she was addicted that she keeps for a reminder. She says she has been clean for three years.
Sanders shows a mug shot of her from when she was addicted that she keeps for a reminder.

Sanders shows felt posters she said she would spend hours coloring when she was high on meth. Meth highs can last for hours, and addicts have been known to stay awake for days on end.
Sanders shows a felt poster she colored while high on meth. She says she would spend hours coloring while she was high.

John Sanders, Charlotte’s husband, and her two daughters Ashley Greenlee, 14, left, and Amber Greenlee, 12, center, at their home in Cookeville, Tenn. The girls were taken from Charlotte by the Department of Children’s Services for a time.
Sanders and her daughters, Amber Greenlee, center, and Ashley Greenlee, right, at their home in Cookeville, Tenn.
Ashley Greenlee, John Sanders, Amber Greenlee and Charlotte Sanders at their home in Cookeville, Tenn. — a home very different than the one in which the girls grew up when their mother, Charlotte, was making and using meth.
Cumberland County Sheriff Butch Burgess in his office in Crossville, Tenn. Burgess has taken in more than 30 foster children in 10 years, and he started a safe house in Cumberland County where children can be taken between the time their parents are arrested and when foster care can be found for them. In April, May and June of this year, there were 16 meth investigations with 28 children involved Cumberland County, according to Tennessee Department of Children’s Services statistics.
Burgess in his office where he keeps toys for children who have to wait there until foster parents can be found for them following the arrest of their parents or caregivers. When completed, a safe housed, conceived by Burgess, will fill that role.
Cumberland Co. Sheriff’s Department investigator Jeff Slayton, who is certified by the Drug Enforcement Administration to enter meth labs, shows a respirator mask used by investigators when they are working inside the labs. Little is known of the long-term effects of exposure to the chemicals used in meth production. “Another 10 years and I might have cancer from going into meth labs,” Slayton said.
Slayton shows a protective suit that can be used by investigators when they are working inside meth labs.
Slayton shows protective gloves investigators use when they are working inside meth labs.
Slayton shows protective boots investigators can use when they are working inside labs.

Slayton shows materials used when gathering evidence at a meth lab.
Slayton, right, and Mike Steinmann, the executive director of the Cumberland Children’s Center. This Cumberland County safehouse, located in Crossville, was conceived by Cumberland County Sheriff Butch Burgess, and is also called the House of Hope. It will house children whose parents have been arrested while the Department of Children’s Services locates a foster home for them.

Steinmann talks on the phone in the front office of the House of Hope.
Steinmann in the front office of the House of Hope, where toys have been provided for children to play with.

Steinmann shows an office in the House of Hope.
Tennessee Department of Transportation workers in October sign in for an Army National Guard-seminar in Gray, Tenn., on the dangers of meth. TDOT bridge inspectors have found at least two meth labs in West Tennessee, according to the department.

TDOT workers watch a presentation on the dangers of meth put on by the Army National Guard in Gray, Tenn., in October. The presentation was titled “Life or Meth,” and this slide shows pictures of a 15-year-old girl addicted to the drug.
The presentation was led by Sgt. Major Deborah Rose-Spangler, right.

After watching the presentation on meth by the Army National Guard at the National Guard base in Gray, Tenn., Tennessee Department of Transportation highway maintenance worker Michael Price, 51, of Morrisburg in Hawkins County, Tenn. is shown here inside a special educational trailer that displays drugs and drug paraphernalia.
Price inspects a meth lab displayed inside the trailer.

Some of the household chemicals that can be used to manufacture meth.
A meth lab displayed inside the trailer.
McMinn County Sheriff Steve Frisbie shows a shower facility he had installed behind his Athens, Tenn., office to decontaminate people taken from buildings where meth was being made.

Frisbie shows shampoo used in the shower facility.
Inside the shower facility, Frisbie shows a biohazard bag of the type used to discard contaminated items.
Benny Bivens, a McMinn County maintenance supervisor, designed the shower facility for the McMinn County Sheriff’s Department.

Frisbie and Bivens stand next to a receptacle where the contaminated shower water drains.
Methamphetamine, in the blue packets, and chemicals from the meth-making process seized by the McMinn County Sheriff's Department.

"This is pure ice," says McMinn Co. Sheriff's Department drug agent B.J. Johnson. "Ice" is a street term for meth. This was seized by the McMinn County Sheriff's Department. Each bag, about the size of a cigarette lighter, can sell for up to $100, depending on its weight, Johnson says.
Meth seized by the McMinn County Sheriff’s Department.

In his Athens, Tenn., office, McMinn Co. Sheriff’s Department drug agent B.J. Johnson bags up meth seized by his department.