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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LWAM Investigation Dismantles Fentanyl Distribution Organization

APPLETON, Wis. – During the week of May 1, 2023, investigators and agents with the Lake Winnebago Area Metropolitan Enforcement Group – Drug Unit (LWAM), United States Marshals Service, and area law enforcement agencies arrested multiple members of a drug trafficking organization who are alleged to be responsible for obtaining and distributing approximately 1 million fentanyl pills throughout Northeast Wisconsin in less than a year. The street value of this quantity of fentanyl pills is approximately \$5 million. The investigation was led by members of LWAM with assistance from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

“Fentanyl poses a major danger to our communities,” said **Attorney General Josh Kaul**. “Thank you to the investigators whose diligent work is helping to protect public safety in the Fox Valley.”

“I want to thank the members of our community who provided tips and information that helped us in this operation, and I want to assure them that we will continue to work tirelessly to keep our streets safe and free from the dangers of illicit drugs,” said **Appleton Police Chief Polly Olson**. “I also want to recognize the hard work and dedication of our officers and investigators who worked tirelessly to bring this operation to a successful conclusion. Their commitment to public safety and their willingness to put themselves in harm's way to protect our community is a testament to their professionalism and dedication.”

“Fentanyl is clearly the number one drug threat to communities throughout the Fox Valley area,” said **LWAM Special Agent in Charge Jeremiah Winscher**.

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“Alongside our local, state and federal partners, LWAM will continue to work diligently investigating and holding accountable those who chose to distribute this poison in our communities and cause harm to the citizens and families that live and work here.”

These arrests, which were largely a result of thorough and diligent follow up related to the [December 2022](#) seizure of approximately 54 thousand fentanyl pills, mark a significant disruption in the flow of highly lethal fentanyl pills to the area and demonstrates law enforcement’s commitment to thwarting the deadly threat of fentanyl in our communities.

As a synthetic opioid originally intended for pain management, fentanyl can come in many forms including powder or counterfeit pill form in varying shapes, sizes and colors. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. [According to the DEA](#), fentanyl can be deadly in quantities as little as 2mg, which is only the size of a few grains of sand and approximately [60% of seized fentanyl pills](#) contain a potentially lethal dose.

LWAM is a multijurisdictional task force comprised of investigators from 15 participating law enforcement agencies within Winnebago, Outagamie, Fond du Lac and Calumet Counties. LWAM’s mission is the investigation and enforcement of both state and federal drug trafficking laws with the goal of preventing the flow of illegal and dangerous drugs into the communities within these counties as well as holding offenders who chose to distribute dangerous drugs within these communities accountable for their criminal activities.

All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty. No further information can be released at this time as the investigation remains ongoing with additional arrests anticipated in the future.