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Sheriff's Department receives \$\$ to fight methamphetamine

By Mona Sandefur, GateHouse News Service

BENTON — Surrounded by Franklin County officials, Sheriff Bill Wilson accepted a \$258,500 mock check from U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello Thursday afternoon. Costello said the federal funds are earmarked to combat the use and spread of methamphetamine.

"This is a grant to fight methamphetamine use in Franklin County and Southern Illinois," Costello said. "The money is earmarked to help the Franklin County Sheriff's Department to work with police departments in Franklin and neighboring counties to stop the distribution and manufacture of methamphetamine."

Costello said meth is one of the most addictive drugs being manufactured and distributed today, with some becoming addicted the first time they try the drug. He said the money was earmarked from justice department and state funding that typically goes to the FBI and local law enforcement agencies.

Wilson said the funds would be used to purchase transportation vehicles to assist with the removal of meth-making materials.

"The chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine are extremely dangerous and it is not recommended that the chemicals and materials be transported in a squad car," he said. "The vehicles used to transport meth materials must be decontaminated after each use. We will make the vehicles available to other counties. We have worked together with other counties in the past and have used their vehicles. This is one way we can give back to other counties."

Costello said specialized training and equipment is required to combat the spread and use of methamphetamine. The former police officer, deputy sheriff, investigator and head of the former narcotics division said he knows what it means to fight the fight against drug abuse.

Earlier in the day, Costello presented a \$446,500 mock check to the Union County Sheriff's Department. He said that department was completely out of funds to combat methamphetamine use and manufacture.