

Six charged in crime spree at Daniel Boone High School

Ex-students broke in 3 times, police say

By Jason A. Kahl
Reading Eagle

Six people were charged Wednesday in a crime spree at Daniel Boone High School that resulted in nearly \$140,000 in damage and stolen goods, state police said.

Police said the group - all former students who range in age from 17 to 19 years old - took part in three break-ins at the high school over the past two years, stealing computers, tools and surveillance cameras and breaking a water pipe and flooding the building.

It was unclear if any of the six were students at the time of the crimes.

The group members, one of whom was charged as a juvenile, planned the crimes using a display board, lookouts and two-way radios, troopers said. They also gave the attacks code names such as "Operation Shrimp in a Basket" - in which they stole six security cameras mounted on the roof of the school at 501 Chestnut St. in Union Township, investigators said.

Troopers said the ringleader was Donald C. Fister, 19, of the 900 block of Berks Street, Birdsboro.

Fister had a key to the high school and used it, investigators said. It was unclear how he allegedly got the key.

Computers valued at about \$12,000 were taken in one of the break-ins, investigators said.

Police said the group planned the crimes in Fister's garage in the 300 block of West Second Street in Birdsboro, where investigators recovered the surveillance cameras and some of the computers.

The others charged as adults: Koty M. Bowdy, 18, of the first block of Montello Road, South Heidelberg Township; Elijah J. Horning, 18, of the 2300 block of Limekiln Road, Amity Township; Andrea M. Mickletz, 18, of the 500 block of West First Street, Birdsboro; and Cheryl Lynn Speece, 18, of the 100 block of East First Street, Birdsboro.

Contact Jason A. Kahl: 610-371-5024 or jkahl@readingeagle.com

Well-planned operation targeted 6 surveillance cameras, police say

The most audacious crime in a burglary and vandalism spree at Daniel Boone High School was code-named "Operation Shrimp in a Basket" by those charged in the crimes, state police said Wednesday.

The attack on the school occurred Sept. 9 and was planned in the Birdsboro garage of ringleader Donald C. Fister, investigators said.

Operation Shrimp in a Basket targeted six surveillance cameras that recently had been mounted on the roof of the high school, troopers said.

Investigators gave this account:

Andrea M. Michletz and Cheryl Lynn Speece acted as lookouts in vehicles while Fister, Elijah J. Horning and Koty M. Bowdy entered the building using a key Fister had obtained.

Once inside, the trio climbed to the roof on an indoor ladder.

The three hung a ladder over the side of the building while Fister removed the cameras.

A 17-year-old charged as a juvenile in some of the crimes was not involved in Operation Shrimp in a Basket, investigators said.

It was not known why the group, all former students, used the code name.

The monetary loss from the crime spree included stolen computers valued at \$12,000; the surveillance cameras, with a total value of \$3,500; and \$121,000 damage after group members broke a water pipe and flooded the high school, investigators said.

According to police:

On July 19, 2007, three members of the group broke into the school and took tools and equipment.

On Jan. 22, 2008, Fister and Horning broke into the school and broke the water pipe.

Contact Jason A. Kahl: 610-371-5024 or jkahl@readingeagle.com.