

Two Tuesday evening drug busts in Boone, thanks in great measure to a Boone K-9 officer. During the early evening hours of last, Narcotics Investigators with the Boone Police Department and the Ashe County Sheriff's Office ended a large-scale drug investigation with the arrest of a Georgia man. Officers learned that a methamphetamine trafficker from the Atlanta Georgia area was making a large delivery to a location within the Town of Boone. The agencies planned to intercept this methamphetamine shipment and arrest the suspect, identified as Mauricio "Mario" Baltazar of Lake City, Georgia. Boone PD and Ashe deputies, joined by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the United States Department of Homeland Security, utilized Boone Police K-9 Maus and her handler Officer J. Warren, with Maus was used to search Baltazar's vehicle. Maus alerted officers to the presence of drugs inside the vehicle and approximately (1/2) pound of crystal methamphetamine was found and seized—a street value of \$22,000. Baltazar was charged with 2-counts of Trafficking in Methamphetamine and is currently lodged in the Watauga County Jail under a \$75,000 bond and is scheduled to appear in court on May 28th.

On the same evening, just after 9, Boone officers again called on Warren and K9 Maus after Officer R. Blevins conducted a traffic stop for speeding and an equipment violation. The driver, identified as 19-year old Jerry Dean Osborne of 185 Village Drive, Apartment 1410, Wilkesboro, was suspected to be carrying controlled substances in his vehicle, causing Warren and Maus to be called to the scene to assist. Maus lead officers to search the trunk of the vehicle, which revealed approximately (1/2) pound of marijuana and a book bag containing over \$20,000 in cash, with Boone Narcotics Investigators called in, saying they had reason to believe Osborne was in Boone to distribute marijuana, and that the money was the proceeds of illegal drug sales. Jerry Dean Osborne was arrested and charged with the Felony Possession with Intent to Sell and Deliver Marijuana, Felony Manufacture Marijuana by Packaging and Felony Maintaining a Vehicle to Keep a Controlled Substance. Osborne was lodged in the Watauga County Jail under a \$3,000 Bond.