TRAMERICA CITY — Ronald Norfleet’s eyes dart across the cinder block prison walls that will, if he does nothing, confine him until his death.

The weight of decades behind Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility’s barbed wire fences presses on Norfleet, a 47-year-old whose blue, orange-striped Michigan Department of Corrections uniform hangs loosely over his lean frame like a well-worn glove.

A misspent youth in Detroit made Norfleet familiar with the prison sounds — radio crackles, the slam of heavy doors and clicks of steel-toed boots. Two past stints were enough for Norfleet, but he landed in more trouble after a move to Traverse City.

Now, he often spends his one hour per day outside a cell at a law library, searching for...
RACE
Black drug defendants get longer sentences

FROM PAGE 1A

Obese procedures that could cost his 96 year prime recent bias and racism led to his sentences — the longest in Grand Traverse County's Third Third district's third largest district. McIntyre's felony clients, black, and the reason "It's just because it's caused that shackle-handled with a woman's sentence, that's the why she pushes for fair, even lenient, sentences. But she recently found herself grabbing for words when she presented to a Record-Eagle reporters: "It's starting a disparity between the drug defendants could expect in Grand Traverse County: defendants of different races. "It is very concerning and disturbing," she said: "I would never have expected this." African-American felony drug defendants on average were sent to prison 43 months longer compared to white suspects 12 months between the races data according to collected data from across the state. The data mirror national studies that African-Americans have more exposure to the criminal justice system and higher incarceration rates than whites. African-Americans accounts for 35% of Grand Traverse County's population, but 42% of U.S. Census data, but nearly one out of every two African-Americans sentenced. Michigan Attorney at the for the Racial Justice Project, a Civil Liberties Union of Michigan member, argued that police factors — from poverty, lack of proper legal representation, language barriers — can cause disparities in sentences. "All of it's a manipulation of power and a system that impacts the country as a whole," she said. Grand Traverse County Prosecutor Bob Constanza denied the local sentencing disparity could be chalked up to racism. He said the data show the disparity across the state for case-by-case factors. Major drug dealers are disproportionately black and many had lengthy criminal pasts — violent criminal records, he said. "If you take out all of these factors, the disparity really is not looking at the case independently, you're looking at data required to do," he said. "We're looking at the data for a large part of the state and that's the disparity between black and white defendants." An independent data analyst said that correla- tions and found differences in criminal history statistically significant, with very little chance alone accounted for the disparities. Additional testing showed the difference between black and white defendants' sentences, calculations that removed outlying data showed was even less likely caused by chance variation.

"VERY CONCERNING"

Attorney Juniet McIntyre seldom holds her tongue during the 13th Circuit's third largest district. McIntyre's felony clients, black, and the reason "It's just because it's caused that shackle-handled with a woman's sentence, that's the why she pushes for fair, even lenient, sentences. But she recently found herself grabbing for words when she presented to a Record-Eagle reporters: "It's starting a disparity between the drug defendants could expect in Grand Traverse County: defendants of different races. "It is very concerning and disturbing," she said: "I would never have expected this." African-American felony drug defendants on average were sent to prison 43 months longer compared to white suspects 12 months between the races data according to collected data from across the state. The data mirror national studies that African-Americans have more exposure to the criminal justice system and higher incarceration rates than whites. African-Americans accounts for 35% of Grand Traverse County's population, but 42% of U.S. Census data, but nearly one out of every two African-Americans sentenced. Michigan Attorney at the for the Racial Justice Project, a Civil Liberties Union of Michigan member, argued that police factors — from poverty, lack of proper legal representation, language barriers — can cause disparities in sentences. "All of it's a manipulation of power and a system that impacts the country as a whole," she said. Grand Traverse County Prosecutor Bob Constanza denied the local sentencing disparity could be chalked up to racism. He said the data show the disparity across the state for case-by-case factors. Major drug dealers are disproportionately black and many had lengthy criminal pasts — violent criminal records, he said. "If you take out all of these factors, the disparity really is not looking at the case independently, you're looking at data required to do," he said. "We're looking at the data for a large part of the state and that's the disparity between black and white defendants." An independent data analyst said that correla- tions and found differences in criminal history statistically significant, with very little chance alone accounted for the disparities. Additional testing showed the difference between black and white defendants' sentences, calculations that removed outlying data showed was even less likely caused by chance variation.

FROM STAFF REPORTS

TRAVERSE CITY - Parents of certain color"... and I'm surprised," she said, "nobody died." Northfield, who is African-American, said the black-white disparity was a "Recognize the red meridian between the drug sentences and white defendants received in the local judicial system. All things equal, the law dictates Northfield and other black of felony drug charges are punishments to their white counterparts. But data shows when the court figures are examined, Grand Traverse County, it is weighted in favor of white defendants.

How we did it: R-E reporters scour court, corrections data

Charles Louise Arnold leaves an 86th District courtroom after waiving her preliminary examination on multi drug feclonies.

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TRaverse City RECORD-EAGLE Sunday, February 12, 2017

FROM PAGE ONE

Felony drug defendants, by race, charged as habitual offender

Important terms

FELONIES

Serious crimes in which a conviction could lead to a prison term. Michigan's felony prosecutor recommends sentences in circuit court. Misdemeanors are less serious, are tried in district courts and frequently result in fines. With some exceptions, lead to jail time.

HABITUAL OFFENDER

A defendant in Michigan who has one or more past felony convictions. A current case that can be used to sentence a defendant for his previous convictions.

SENTENCING GUIDELINES

A set of variables accounting for a defendant's criminal history and past offenses that, when scored, generated a recommended sentence range. A recent Michigan Supreme Court decision — People v. Lockridge — changed the guidelines from mandatory to advisory.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

A term that notes the likelihood a difference is caused by a factor rather than random chance. A statistic test value, or a p-value which reflects the probability that defendant's sentences would show a difference from another sample of data. A p-value of less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

Judge Thomas Power talks in 13th Circuit Court in 2011.

Felony drug defendants, by race, charged as habitual offender

“I never envisioned it going to be some decades.”

Ronald Norfleet, serving a 56-year sentence for a felony drug conviction

The sentencing spike

This analysis breaks down the average sentences in months by race for felony drug cases in Grand Traverse County by year from 2012-2016.

Important terms

“HABITUAL OFFENDER”

A term that describes the defendant who has at least three prior felony convictions.

“WHITE”

A term that describes the defendant who is non-black and non-Spanish origin.

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**New gun bills proposed**

Legislation takes aim at concealed carry licenses

BY CAROL THOMPSON
cthompson@record-eagle.com

TRaverse City — A package of four bills recently introduced in the House of Representatives would relax Michigan gun laws to allow many Michiganders to conceal firearms without carrying a concealed pistol license.

The proposed legislation dubbed “constitutional carry” bills would allow the state’s concealed carry laws with its open carry ban, so long as Tristan Cole, a Republican from Muskegon, Michigan already allows residents to openly carry their weapons without licenses or training.

“This is a place we’re waiting to see how we’re carrying a handgun,” Cole said.

House Bills 4416-4419 were introduced Tuesday.

People who are barred from possessing firearms — including those convicted of felonies — still would be forbidden from carrying weapons, Cole said.

It would still be illegal to conceal a weapon in all-limits places such as day care centers, schools and hospitals.

But the bills could mean more people conceal weapons without going through the training required to legally carry a holstered firearm.

The move against what Range Safety Officer David Schleisman said he wants to see of the state’s Law Enforcement anyway.

Black defendants face greater ratio of Grand Traverse drug dealing charges

BY MATT TROUTMAN
mtrotman@record-eagle.com

and ERIN SLOAN
esloan@record-eagle.com

**ADDICT VS. DEALER**

TRaverse City — The difference between freedom and a years-long prison sentence in Grand Traverse County’s justice system often depends on a label: Addict or dealer.

An addict has a better chance for leniency and a shot at rehabilitation. Meanwhile, those labeled as drug dealers face unmerited sentences, a police report states.

Richar Sanders, 48, thought of himself as an addict when authorities arrested him in July 2015. They found him with crack cocaine and heroin — drugs he carted from his native Port Harourt to Traverse City.

“I consider myself an addict that was trying to help friends out,” Sanders said. “All of us got into money together.

But Sanders went to prison for five years on a drug dealing charge while his accomplices walked free. It’s an outcome data shows more often happens to out-of-town African-American drug defendants like him.

**PINK MONKEY**

Sanders doesn’t dispute he should be in prison. Possession is nine-tenths of the law after all, he said.

A pink monkey in Sanders’ backpack contained more than enough illicit stuffing, a police report states.

Richar Sanders was trying to help friends out. All of us got into money together.

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Richard Sanders

**EXPLORER**

Click to explore a story through links provided below and rate it using a scale of 0 to 10.

By Matt Troutman
mtrotman@record-eagle.com

In the Grand Traverse County area, police say drug defendants like him.

**Link to story**

Reporters continue to compile, order, benchmark and measure data to answer questions we all have about whether a drug-related violation will lead to bigger, better business.

The Record-Eagle’s six-month drug違dealing case study covers Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties.

Reporters continue to compile, order, benchmark and measure data to answer questions we all have about whether a drug-related violation will lead to bigger, better business.
**Drug**

**Black defendants face greater ratio of drug dealing charges**

**FROM PAGE 1A**

distribute drugscouriers deliver to the region. He contends those local led him back into addiction and supplemented his drug supply line, centered on a bus route from the town to northern Michigan. “It’s a misconception that drug dealers turn people over to law enforcement,” he said. “People need their own family and friends out on drugs.”

**Bcheduled One**

The Record-Eagle shows non-local drug defendants like Sanders pay the least price in plea deals and faced much longer prison terms than local and non-local Cauca-

**SOtlLVChains**

Everything counts more in Traverse City, be it greater gasoline or a dose of heroin.

“T’ll have a market here,” Comer said. “We have the money that drug traffick-

**Black suspects in Local and Non-local Drug Cases**

**LOCAL**

| Local Black | Local White | Non-local Black | Non-local White |

**Drug charges by the numbers**

**This comparison breaks down local and non-local, black and white defendants who were charged and sentenced as habitual offenders over a five-year period in Grand Traverse County.**

**MM 55 STIHL® YARD BOSSES**

**$369.95**

**MS 170 CHAIN SAW**

**$179.95**

“I love this tool. I was very surprised at how much power it has,”

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**I’m glad I went with the 170. I was a lot more price and reliability are outstanding,”

--- user psulmannbro1938

**My wife was getting by on white supplies last,” the actual list price bar length may vary from the effective cut length based on which powerhead it's mounted on. © 2017 STIHL.

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Sunday, May 21, 2017

**By Matt Troutman**

Jeanne McPherson holds a photograph of her daughter, Kristen Fast, from when Fast was in kindergarten. Fast’s struggle with addiction began at the age of 13.

Mercy varies toward drug offenders in GT region

**BY MATT TROUTMAN**

Mercy varies toward drug offenders in GT region.

**BY ERIN SLOAN**

Mercy varies toward drug offenders in GT region.

Race accusation sparks dispute

Few black felony drug defendants in outlying Grand Traverse counties

**BY MATT TROUTMAN**

Few black felony drug defendants in outlying Grand Traverse counties.

**BY ERIN SLOAN**

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Few black felony drug defendants in outlying Grand Traverse counties.

Visit Record-Eagle.com to see videos about Kristen Fast, her struggle with addiction and drug offenders’ treatment within Benzie County’s justice system. The Record-Eagle data series called High Crimes installments, along with stories, are also available on the Grand Traverse County drug cases data dashboard online.


"I just wanted to come home," Fast said. "I had a newfound respect for my mom. I really wanted to be a man to her."

Williams was a woman function of where Fast was coming from, she is, as different counties approach addiction and recovery, sometimes wildly divergent paths.

Data from five northwest Michigan counties — Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Kalkaska and Le-

luman — highlights Benzie County’s biggest concern: drug cases as a major community problem. More than 60 percent of Benzie County drug convictions in 2013 were for possession or distribution of drugs, without a public record. In 2015, 53 percent of drug convictions in the county ended in conviction. There are other ways to protect the public, the governor said. "If there’s a way I can address that, whatever it may be, to benefit this community...that doesn’t necessarily mean a conviction," he said.

Williams was long suspected, as what local attorney Jesse Cooney said. He said Benzie County Prosecutors Mike Perreault and Benzie County Prosecutor Sara Swanson and Grand Traverse County Prosecutor Rob Conney also agree, as Grand Traverse County’s chief prosecutor, Mike Perreault, said he hears of drug cases as the region’s top threat to public safety and health. More recently, the drug court, more deferred sen-

ience and offers to curb felony convictions

"Half of my problems are cura-

bles in the community," Per- reault said. "I say, ‘Fireworks,’" Hubbell said. "I’ve heard that a lot before," Conney said. "People who have problems with drugs as the region’s top threat to public safety and health. More recently, the drug court, more deferred sen-

"I don’t feel it was a failure, but it was a failure," Swanson said. "Even if they do get a clean slate," she said, "that addiction is a very, very powerful force."

Fast still has a chance to come home, if she chooses, Swanson said. She said she helped Fast receive more than $17,000 in cash assistance. Fast receives periodic visits from community residents she had before incarceration. De-

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make it easy for those seeking the financial help for the remaining cases: They more often move to spare addicts and those with few funds to pay for their students’ financial aid and options available. The 53 percent of drug convictions in the county ended in conviction. There are other ways to protect the public, the governor said. "If there’s a way I can address that, whatever it may be, to benefit this community...that doesn’t necessarily mean a conviction," he said.
Rossiter’s arguments. “equally culpable” under included, in the case were white suspects, Meadows be reduced because three bond — then at $500,000 Williams argued Parker’s in a Jan. 4 court hearing target black drug defen- local authorities too often kayn Jesse Williams said defendants who made up its total felony caseload — a far cry from the 10 black drug offenders’ sentences black felony drug between black and white their white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris- his white counterparts. “If you’re the one who has grams of heroin and bring- "What I’m saying is, time. His co-defendant, sentenced to a 54-month pris-
Broken Love

Jeanne McPherson holds her grandchildren, Lapah Loope, left, and Kohlton Knight-McPherson, up to the stove to smell the apple pie she baked for dessert. McPherson’s home is rarely empty as family and friends are free to come and go.

Honoring family, like others in small communities, strained by addiction

BY MATT TROUTMAN
mtroutman@record-eagle.com

TRAVERSE CITY — Ron-ald Norfleet’s release from prison is no longer set for when he’s 102 years old. A judge this week resent-senced Norfleet, 48, to serve at least 22 years behind bars. Norfleet still will be a senior citizen, four-time convicted felon and the recipient of Grand Traverse County’s longest drug sen-tence when he’s eligible for parole.

SEE DRUG PAGE 2A

Longest GT drug sentence slashed

Data: Ronald Norfleet still sits atop racial disparity

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See Service Page 5A

Pavilions CEO suggests reimbursement

BY MARK JOHNSON
markjohnson@record-eagle.com

TRAVERSE CITY — Tensions and plans are building in re-gards to 2255 N. Garfield Rd. The 7,500 square-foot building, slated to be an offshoot of the county-owned Grand Traverse Pavilions, isn’t gener-at ing enough rent, county com-missioners say. But if the county wants to switch tenants, it needs to pay back what’s already been invested into the address, said a Pavilions administrator.

GT Pavilions CEO Barry Han-sen proposed a reimbursement for improve-ments in exchange for re-locating a planned health services facility from a building some county officials question should be supporting higher rent pay-ments.

Hansen emailed county Ad-ministrator Tom Menzel Thurs-day with the proposal after finding to the head of commu-nionary Wednesday to approve the publishing of a notice of in-tent to approve a lease contract in the Record-Eagle. The move would increase the length of the existing lease and enable Pa-vilions officers to seek county building authority bonds to pay up to $3.5 million in renovations at the proposed site for a health services facility.

正如麦格农森解析的那家，拉帕·洛普和科尔顿·卡特-麦克弗森，他们到厨房去闻闻烘烤的苹果派。麦克弗森的家很少空着，因为家人们和朋友们总是自由来去。

荣誉家庭，像其他小社区一样，受到毒品滥用的影响

BY MATT TROUTMAN
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TRAVERSE CITY — Ronald Norfleet的释放日期不再是当他是102岁时。法官本周重判了诺弗利特，48岁，至少22年监禁。诺弗利特仍然是一个老公民，四次被定罪的罪犯，是格兰特拉弗斯县最长的毒品罪行，到他有资格免除时。

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最长时间的GT毒品判决削减

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服务页面5A

Pavilions CEO建议赔偿

BY MARK JOHNSON
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TRAVERSE CITY — 县政府和Pavilions的CEO巴里·汉森提出了一个建议。他建议赔偿改善费用，以换取一个计划中的健康服务设施办公室。但是，该县官员质疑该办公室是否应该支持更高的租金。

汉森在周三给县行政官汤姆·门泽尔发邮件，提出了这项建议，因为他发现了周五批准的通知书，该通知书明确表示要批准一个租赁合同。这项行动会将租赁期延长，使Pavilions官员能够寻求县政府的建筑债券，以支付高达$3.5百万的改 造费用。

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Norfleet had $39,000 in cash, including marked bills from a controlled drug purchase, but didn’t uncover how it was in his possession.

They did find heroin in a hotel room occupied by Norfleet’s con- tacts, Alysha Nerg, 26, and Bryan Nerg, 35, who testified against him.

Pajtas at the original sentencing hearing imposed 134-month terms for each of Norfleet’s five convictions on a conspiracy to deliver heroin charge. He also said then that Norfleet’s “background, history, and the nature of the offenses involved” justified him serving those terms consecutively — a decision reviewed in a subsequent appeal.

State appellate judges sent Norfleet’s case back to Judge Richard Pajtas to hear on whether Pajtas would have imposed a different sentence given a recent change in state sentencing guidelines. Trial judges set minimum sentences based on guidelines scores that account for an offender’s severity and a defendant’s criminal history. The guidelines are now advisory, rather than mandatory.

Young argued a memorandum the “circumstances” of Norfleet’s offenses, as determined by his guidelines score. Landed at the 53 percent mark for those who commit a single offense who failed to be rehabilitated, and to 22 years in prison for heroin dealing. The judge stated that whether Pajtas’s crimes and past warranted consecutive sentences for two counts. But he said he couldn’t find additional reasons to justify consecutive terms for the remaining counts.

Norfleet beamed after Pajtas’ decision.

Young said Norfleet “would probably not” receive the same sentence outside northern Michigan, where heroin-related crimes are relatively new.

She said she thought if Norfleet were a white dealer who brought drugs into the community that authorities would still be shocked and appalled. But she acknowledged that Bryan Nerg, who is white, pleaded guilty to the same offense as Norfleet and had five past drug-related convictions.

Nerg received and served a 25-month sentence.

Cooney said Nerg was a drug “runner” for Norfleet, who was the “ring leader” of his dealing scheme. He said dealers at the “top of the pyramid” should receive longer sentences.

“It has nothing to do with race, it again has to do with the dealing and the sophistication of the dealing,” Cooney said.

**TRIANT OF CITY RECORD-EGLE** }

**Above and left, Ronald Norfleet appears in 13th Circuit Court in Traverse City on Wednesday: A judge resencted Norfleet to 22 years in prison for heroin dealing. The term slashes his original by more than half.**
McPherson's pain and the public in small towns. She's judgmental — eyes. But McPherson knows no one is in the middle of the street. She's about Kristen's struggle, not her own. She doesn't think there's another way to make that craving go away.

Kristen likely will return to the same places where her friends and girls who grew up with her. McPherson recently gave a speech to a group of women who have lost loved ones to drug addiction. The women cried. McPherson said the women said McPherson didn't think there's another way to make that craving go away.

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