



Staff Photo by Joey McLeister

Students at Minneapolis North High checked out a confiscated 1988 Callaway Corvette that police now use using for demonstrations.

# Police use drug dealer's car

## Duke's Corvette becomes an example in Minneapolis

By Jill Hodges  
Staff Writer

First, Ralph (Plukey) Duke was busted for drug dealing. Then he forfeited \$1.8 million in cash and property. Next he was sentenced to life in prison. And now, to add insult to incarceration, one of his sports cars has been converted into a Minneapolis police car.

The 1988 Callaway Corvette, a limited-edition, high-performance car valued at \$65,000, has been outfitted with a light bar on top and police decals on the doors. It is wheeled out for education programs to discourage kids from using drugs.

The sides of the sporty black car display the message "Drug users lose everything." The message on the hood proclaims: "Drug users are losers."

"We want to show kids what the messages on the car say," said Lt. Bill O'Rourke. "You might have nice stuff, but drug users lose everything, including their cars."

Police eventually will auction the Corvette and use the proceeds to finance drug enforcement.

Authorities confiscated 35 cars, six houses and \$300,000 cash from Duke, who was arrested in Minneapolis in May 1989. A federal grand jury convicted him of

heading a cocaine ring in the Twin Cities from 1984 to 1989.

Duke's arrest and conviction has been highly touted by police, who have credited the apparent drop in the local cocaine supply, in part, to his departure.

This is not the first time Duke has been used as example. This summer, a billboard bidding him goodbye as he went to prison was posted on 7th St. in St. Paul.

Minneapolis police officer Charles Adams predicts the car will be even more effective.

"People pay more attention to that than they would 10 billboards," he

said. "I must have had 100 calls so far and they've all been positive."

But not all police officers are confident of the car's educational value.

"I don't know if showing off that loot is really what we want to do in the fifth grade," said Sgt. Michael Ganley of the DARE drug education program. "They will know that some drug dealers will have accumulated a Corvette and it gives them the idea that it's possible to do that."

Said Adams: "Who has the car now, though?"