



ROUGH WATERS

Tegan Broadwater, a white Fort Worth police officer, went undercover and infiltrated the Texas Crips. After putting away 51 of them, 41 federally, he now turns his attention to the innocent children left behind by incarcerated parents.

The “Fish Bowl” was a small neighborhood less than three miles southeast of downtown Fort Worth, also known as the Poly area, with only two entrances that were well guarded and were considered impenetrable to surprise raids by police. What once had been a block made up of working-class families had shifted into a dangerous area of gang killings and crack sales.

“Fish bowl was a common term that we all used in law enforcement for that area for some time. The way it was set up, there was one entrance and one exit with lookouts set up at both. Basically, if you were inside that perimeter, you were being seen,” Broadwater says.

“The problem in that area had garnered the attention of the City Council. They got the chief of police to approve an overtime detail that allowed the narcotics unit and gang unit to engage in a high-visibility detail where they did vehicle jump outs, ran search warrants and performed traffic stops when possible. None of it was succeeding. Ultimately, I found out there was a source inside the police department that was sharing information about our activity with those in that area. That is why I felt we weren’t having an effect.”

During Broadwater’s more than decade-long career, he had hoped to work a significant undercover assignment. He was inspired by the likes of Joseph Pistone (a.k.a. Donnie Brasco) and William Queen, who both infiltrated and helped take down major crime organizations.

Broadwater began his career in 1996 with the Fort Worth Police Department. During his time in law enforcement, he was assigned to three narcotics units, the gang unit, the homicide cold case unit and the F.B.I. Gang and Violent Crimes Task Force. He has received dozens of recognitions including a Certificate of Merit for going undercover to locate and seize C-4 explosives from a gang planning retaliation, two awards for his protection detail work at Ground Zero during the 9-11 tragedy and was nominated four times for the Fort Worth Police Department’s Officer of the Year.

Despite his impressive performance, it took four attempts for Broadwater to gain acceptance into the narcotics unit. “First

kingpin in this case was buying and reselling \$250,000 worth of cocaine per week. Broadwater’s focus during the operation was not on confiscating large amounts of dope or trying to eradicate drugs in Fort Worth. He admits that it is impossible to do that. His primary focus was to get inside the organization to solidify strong cases against the members of the gang and force them from the community and into prison.

In Broadwater’s book, *Life in the Fish Bowl*, about his experiences during the 18-month operation, he explains how shockingly organized the Crips had become. “From their home base in South Central LA, the Crips expanded like fast food franchises: test the market, develop a strategy to dominate the area, then bring in an effective branch manager.”

“I was inspired to make a difference. So many people in that neighborhood had grown up there and lived there for 50 years. They were being held captive within their homes because of the violence taking place. If everyone in the neighborhood was just ‘gang,’ then we probably would have just put a fence around it and left it alone,” Broadwater says. “The end goal of the operation was to get to the head of the snake. That was what I had to do.”

Going Under Broadwater had to be creative. It wouldn’t be easy to infiltrate a nearly all-black crime organization as a white cop. He became known as “Tee” from the west side and said that he provided drugs for rich clientele at TCU and local country club folks. “White guys gotta buy dope too,” Broadwater says.

“I didn’t take a lot of time researching. I wanted to believe myself as much as I wanted them to believe me. I dressed comfortably enough to have an alter persona but not feel like I was acting in some play and had all these lines to memorize. My appearance wasn’t all that different than what it is now. None of it was predicated on trying to fit into some certain look. A lot of my undercover personality was my personality.”

Broadwater couldn’t just start at the top. He had to first approach street dealers who sold crack cocaine. In order to get the dealers to introduce Broadwater to their suppliers, he had to make requests for powder cocaine. In exchange for their help in meeting the suppliers, Broadwater would buy some crack and promised to help with moving a little among his clientele.

Once he started making those connections with the suppliers involved in the gang, they would vouch for him to others within the organization. That is how Broadwater was able to slowly work his way up to the highest ranks of the Texas Crips and ultimately take down the kingpin.

Broadwater admits that during the 18 months he spent undercover, he grew

of all, I think it is understandable that it took that long. Narcotics is one of those units where they have a specific need for a specific demographic. It’s not a profiling issue. It’s based on nothing more than it’s easier to integrate someone with a similar demographic into a particular neighborhood that shares that demographic. I understood that I had less of a chance being a 6-foot-1-inch, 220-pound white guy,” Broadwater says.

Texas is the leading entry point for cocaine into the United States. The local

The local kingpin in this case was buying and reselling \$250,000 worth of cocaine per week.

to really like some of the guys he was spending time with (aside from the illegal activity of course). Under different circumstances, he even said that they may have been friends. “I could tell he really started to like these guys. One of the things that attracted me to Tegan was how he treated people when he was on duty... He treated everyone he came across (good or bad) with respect. He tried to help them and mentor them into wanting better for themselves,” says Broadwater’s wife, Holli.

As part of the undercover persona, Broadwater acquired from the police department a Mercedes E-Class that had been seized from a local meth dealer, arrested because he ran from the police in the car filled with meth and guns wearing nothing but a leopard Speedo.

To cover all bases, Broadwater had scoped out a wealthy neighborhood off Hulen Street and found a home that was for sale without the sign in the yard. There was an instance where Broadwater needed to spontaneously go by the home with someone in the car. He walked around to the back of the home, waited outside the back door for a few minutes and then went to get back in the vehicle with the person affiliated to the gang.

Broadwater credits the support of fellow officers and then supervisor, Sgt. David Wilson, for the success of the operation. “I would check in with him [Sgt. Wilson] regularly and let him know what was happening. He had my back within the department. When fellow officers wondered where I was and thought that maybe I was somewhere just screwin’ around, Wilson covered for me,” Broadwater says.

“I had become as close to deep cover as one could get in this modern-day finger-screw everybody-has-to-know-everything world. Even my coworkers had absolutely no clue what I was doing on a daily basis by this point. So much of my time was off the books, no one would know the enormous amount of time that I had dumped into this except maybe my wife, Holli.”

“I was also making so many transactions that I was using more than the whole team would spend in a month, and I wasn’t making any arrests. I had the full trust of Sgt. Wilson.”

“I relied exclusively on my teammates. I may have been rogue in a lot of people’s eyes, but when I went out, I called guys that I had worked with before and trusted them wholly with my life. I could call them and not give them too much information, and they would be there for me,” Broadwater says. During the operation, Broadwater would have them listen to the transactions over cell phones. If they heard the distress signal, they were just a few streets over and could help. “I didn’t want to have some crazy signal. My key phrase was, ‘That’s what I’m talking about.’”

Holli was comfortable with his decision to further his

goals within the police department. There were times during the operation that it was challenging and put a strain on their relationship.

“He would be really stressed, which made him irritable and inattentive at times. He was so preoccupied and trying to juggle so many things that he would forget things. He forgot our anniversary, which made me very sad.”

“There were times he came home and had obviously been in a fight,” Holli says. “We made a pact early on that I would not ask a lot of questions. He knew that it would only



For his work in Operation Fish Bowl, Broadwater earned the Fort Worth Police Department's Officer of the Year award.

“I knew I could stop kids from going into prison. It’s easier to prepare than it is to repair,” Randle says. “Boys go into gangs because they want to belong. They want a relationship. Even if it is a negative relationship, it is still a relationship. Gangs are a perverted concept of family.”

make me worry more. He never told me about the dangerous things. I did not find those things out until I read the book,” she says.

Some moments of Broadwater’s assignment were scarier than others. Besides having a gun pulled on him and pointed in his face, he describes one of his most intense moments of panic. “I entered this house and looked around to see piles of crack cocaine and some guns. There was a television in the corner, and suddenly I recognized the voices on the TV. It was an episode of *Cops* that I had appeared in back when I was in patrol. I positioned myself in front of the TV and proceeded to filibuster to keep anyone from recognizing me. After the episode finished, I did the deal that I was there to do and left as quickly as I could. Nobody had noticed.”

There was another situation where a dealer put a jacket on him. A jacket means that you are labeled as a snitch and are put in danger of being killed by someone within the gang. Broadwater knew for the operation to move forward, he was going to have to take drastic action. He woke up early the next morning, had a bowl of cereal and kissed his sleeping wife before heading over to the house where the gang member who gave him the jacket collected his money in the mornings. He parked and waited patiently. When the guy arrived, Broadwater jumped out, charged the door and hit him square in the face. He then beat him

severely before asking that he take the jacket off him. It was effective because the jacket was removed.

There was only so far that Broadwater could go with the FWPD budget. He had been taking a roll of ones and wrapping them with a few \$20 bills to look the part, but it couldn’t sustain the kind of business he needed to be doing to get closer to the kingpin.

He presented his case to the Drug Enforcement Administration, but he didn’t enlist their help because they wanted to take over and kick Broadwater off the case. In his book, Broadwater says, “Undercover operators rarely get credit. That’s okay with me; it’s just part of working under the radar. But some new entity moving forward on a huge case without utilizing the only guy who’d been directly involved in the inner workings of the conspiracy from the very beginning seemed irresponsible.”

Another supervisor at the time, President of the Fort Worth Police Officers’ Association and Sgt. Steve Hall, knew of Broadwater’s previous performance in the department and was comfortable with him handling such an operation due to his work in east Fort Worth, self-driven motivation and willingness to commit to a project. Sgt. Hall suggested that he call Special Agent Jennifer Coffindaffer with the F.B.I. Violent Crimes Task Force. “Tegan and I talked almost daily about different funding sources,” Sgt. Hall says.

In his book, Broadwater reflects on how important Sgt. Wilson’s support was in moving forward. “Not many supervisors in his position would have gone half this far out of their way to accommodate an old-school, long-term, undercover operation like this. Not to mention, after he’d battled upper management to this point, he would now miss the reward of seeing the project through to the end.”

Agent Coffindaffer was happy to allow Broadwater to continue as the sole undercover officer in the operation. With the F.B.I.’s involvement came perks. Within a few days, Broadwater was approved for government overtime pay, a Land Rover with audio/video surveillance equipment and access to thousands of dollars.

It would be several months undercover before Broadwater was presented with the perfect opportunity to take down the kingpin and end Operation Fish Bowl. On April 3, 2005, Broadwater attended the self-proclaimed “4x3 Day,” an annual party the Crips held in the park bordering the Fish Bowl. The plan was to force a deal during the party that would include the kingpin in the transaction process.

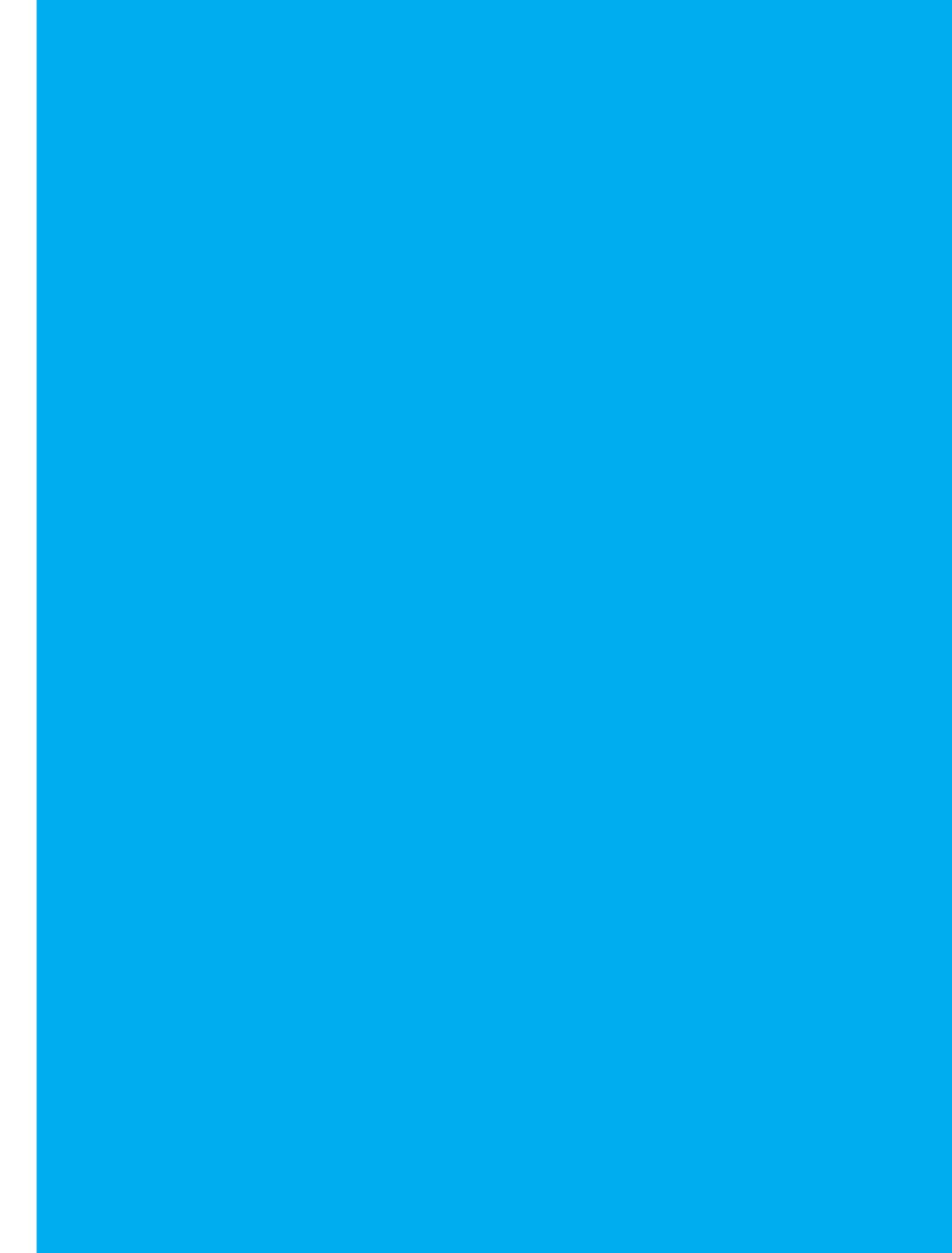
It worked. The kingpin pulled a small bag of cocaine out of his pocket and passed it off in front of Broadwater, which ultimately led to his demise. “It was surreal... slow motion and...confetti,” Broadwater says. “It was a culmination of so much work, and the emotional value of something like that is indescribable. It solidified the end of the entire process.”

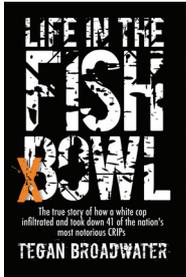
In May of 2006, the Grand Jury indicted 38 federally charged suspects with three more remaining. May 17 was the round-up date, and the preparation was grueling. Time was of the essence for safety reasons because Broadwater’s true identity had been revealed.

Holli says that her husband did receive death threats, which made it scary to be home alone. “We got a PO Box when he started working undercover and used that as our address. We got permission to take our house off the county records, and we both changed our driver’s licenses to PO Box,” she says.

Precautions were taken to keep Broadwater and his wife and son safe during this time. On many occasions, they would all pile in the truck with sleeping bags and a DVD player while Broadwater did his routine police work.

Broadwater and Agent Coffindaffer were responsible for interviewing many of the arrestees to try to get cooperation, information or a plea. “Some of the guys





Life in the Fish Bowl:
The true story of how a white cop infiltrated and took down 41 of the nation's most notorious

Crips
\$14.95

Proceeds benefit charities that mentor children with incarcerated parents. Books are available on Amazon.com and can be found at area Barnes & Noble bookstores. For more information, visit fishbowl41.com.

were really cool, others refused to speak with me and some still thought of me as my undercover persona, Tee, asking for verification to some of their stories," Broadwater says.

The series of events was covered in national and local news, including when the kingpin's girlfriend attempted to take over shortly after he was sentenced. She was assassinated at an Arlington nightclub

by a rival Blood gang member in late February of 2007.

Turning the Page For his undercover work in Operation Fish Bowl, Broadwater earned the US Attorney Commendation Award and the Fort Worth Police Department's Officer of the Year Award. The operation was nominated for the F.B.I.'s Overall Case of the Year.

For several months after Operation Fish Bowl, Broadwater worked undercover as a crook among the Mexican Mafia. He thought he had the formula worked out and had intentions of "blowing it up even bigger than Fish Bowl." Unfortunately, the operation was heavily regulated by upper management at the police department and the FBI. "I knew that without the freedom I had before, it would never be successful."

Broadwater left the police department in May of 2008. He founded Tactical Systems Network, LLC in Fort Worth, which is a security firm that provides high-level stra-

tegic security consultations, armed protection, training and investigation services to such clientele as high-profile executives, politicians, celebrities and professional athletes.

"Tegan came to me with this idea of starting a company that would provide the best security service for this community," Holli says. "He has really flourished in his new role as CEO and president of his company."

The department was sad to see him go. "Tegan was an outstanding police officer. I was disappointed when he chose a different path. I thought that he had several good years left in him, and I had looked forward to working with him," Sgt. Hall says.

The decision to write the book was an easy one for Broadwater. He kept personal notes during the operation in the event that he ever chose to memorialize his experience.

"One common reaction from nearly everyone who has read the book has been: 'This is all happening in Fort Worth?' It's something that residents of Fort Worth need to be aware of," Broadwater says.

A total of 104 children were left without a parent resulting from Operation Fish Bowl.

A large portion of the proceeds from Broadwater's book go to benefit H.O.P.E. Farm. The mission of the organization is to provide at-risk boys an opportunity to know Jesus Christ and develop life skills consistent with Biblical truths. "The purpose of the operation was to salvage the neighborhood and the community; the purpose of the book was to salvage the children and their future," Broadwater says.

Gary Randle, co-founder and executive director of H.O.P.E. Farm, served 15 years with the Fort Worth Police Department. It was his experience as a juvenile investigator, seeing first-hand the high level of minority children going into the criminal justice system, which made him want to do something significant.

"I told the Lord that I was available to be used. I knew I could stop kids from going into prison. It's easier to prepare than it is to repair," Randle says. "Boys go into gangs because they want to belong. They want a relationship. Even if it is a negative relationship, it is still a relationship. Gangs are a perverted concept of family. At H.O.P.E. Farm, we fill their cup. We fill that emotional need."

Broadwater first approached Randle and gave him a copy of his book. "I gave Tegan an overwhelming two thumbs up. When he came to me, completely unsolicited, and said he wanted to give a portion of the proceeds from the book to H.O.P.E. Farm, I couldn't believe it," Randle says. "It's great that he is bringing attention to the cycle that these young boys can fall into."

Randle says that only focusing efforts on the boys is not effective. "We have to develop the mothers. You can't fill the glass if it doesn't have a bottom."

A year after the dust had settled and everyone had been convicted, Broadwater went back to the Fish Bowl. Posing as a reporter doing a follow-up on the police operation and raids, he interviewed the families that were now living in the neighborhood. "The area had changed for the better times 10. I noticed that houses were fixed up, flowers had been planted, fences repaired, fresh paint on siding. People either didn't know about the operation or had only heard about what had happened. It took a massive transformation and remains a place that is much safer than it ever has been." **fw**

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