Credit Lt. Pat Salazar of the McKinley County Sheriff's Office for doing his part in keeping the heat on McKinley County's drug dealers who operate under the radar of other drug-fighting agencies.

Street level drug activity isn't done by the kingpins, but by the people who sell and use illegal narcotics. "Druggies" at whatever level are the scourge of every neighborhood. They attract crime and violence like a dead animal attracts vultures.

The people who do such illegal are fairly blatant in some areas of Gallup and McKinley County. This observation is maddening, but it is something that Salazar has grabbed by the horns and something that doesn't appear that he'll rest on. That means if you're doing something wrong, Salazar and crew probably aren't far off the trail.

Recently, Salazar oversaw a jail investigation whereby some methamphetamine was suspected of being brought into the McKinley County Detention Center by a corrections officer. That idea of that going anywhere was quickly squashed thanks to some heady investigative work done by deputies taking direction from Salazar along with officials from the detention center.

And then there are the instances in which deputies make routine traffic stops and go the distance in nailing drug offenders. Salazar recently singled out deputies A.J. Noriega and Johnson Lee as two of MCSO's finest that you don't want to cross.

No doubt about it, working drug cases can be labor intensive. Plain clothed officers have short street lives that last only until the good guys become recognizable to the bad guys. Ditto for undercover informants, whether employed by the police or otherwise. To say that one's life is on the line in such instances is an understatement.

In Gallup and McKinley County, there seems to be no shortage of street dealers who peddle meth and heroine. Bust one, and another one pops up. Local political leaders must continue giving people like Salazar the resources needed to stamp out illegal drug activity and the "kingpin" players who run the game.

The efforts by Salazar and the MCSO should be applauded. Most of the crime in Gallup and McKinley County is attributed to substance abuse and one of the ways to decrease crime, police officials have said throughout the years, is to get at illegal drug activity.

It’s good to see that Salazar is sticking to an aggressive approach in what has become an illegal wholesale and retail business. Let’s hope Gallup and McKinley County’s year-end crime statistics show a big improvement.

By Bernie Dotson