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WATCHDOG REPORT



MATTHEW BERRY/EAGLE-GAZETTE

Brett Fingle looks for a serial number on a Bluetooth-enabled speaker at Lev's Pawn Shop in Lancaster. Pawnshop employees recommend that people make lists of and photograph the serial numbers to make retrieving belongings easier if they're stolen.

HITTING BURGLER TWICE

Local policies, state law differ on stolen items at pawnshops

SPENCER REMOQUILLO
 THE EAGLE-GAZETTE STAFF

LANCASTER—Richard Lerch thought he heard a noise at his front door but ignored it once the noise stopped.

A noise came again, but this time around back with the sound of someone opening his screen door. Lerch, 73, got up, opened the back door and was met by a man he had never seen before, wearing a large coat, possibly gloves, and carrying a large duffel bag. It was the middle of August.

Although he thought the man's appearance was strange, it wasn't

strange enough to do much about it other than turn the man away when he asked for Lerch's permission to hunt ginseng on his property.

Lerch learned later that the man was expecting to break into an empty house that he could rummage through without interruption. Lerch only delayed the break-in. The man came back when Lerch left his home minutes later to pick up his wife, Bonnie, at the airport.

The retired couple returned to their Lake Road home to find their back door open and items missing,

including a change jar, gold jewelry and several guns. No items were knocked over or drawers rifled through, as one would imagine the aftermath of a burglary appearing. If the door hadn't been open, it might have taken days for the Lerches to realize what had happened.

"It gives you the creeps that someone was being that bold and walking in and around your house," Bonnie Lerch said.

The Lerches' home is surrounded by trees, rolling hills and several nearby neighbors who also were recently victimized. Someone broke in, searched their homes, taking what they wanted and leaving only an unsettling feeling behind for the owners to discover

See **STOLEN**, Page 5A

Heroin boosting sex trade in Ohio

Increase in prostitution confronts rural towns

JONA ISON
 GANNETT OHIO

Street prostitution has crept into rural Ohio as communities struggle to gain ground in a battle against heroin addiction.

Prostitution has garnered a national spotlight in Chillicothe, a city of about 22,000 an hour south of Columbus, where drugs and sex for money are the common threads among six cases from the past year of women going missing.

But it's not alone as communities including Mansfield and Zanesville have

noted a rise in women addicted to heroin turning to prostitution. As such, the women prostituting are at greater risk of harm, and strapped police departments are seeking the best way to handle it.

In Chillicothe two sides of the community have converged at the corner of Bridge and Second streets in the past three years.

A rundown gas station was renovated in 2012 and, in an effort to curb crime, it is no longer an intercity bus stop. Just

See **SEX**, Page 2A



CHRIS COOK/GANNETT OHIO PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
 As heroin abuse rises in rural Ohio, some police departments have been facing an uptick in street-level prostitution.

Police Athletic League boxing KOs drugs

Participants say sport helps them stay clean

JEFF BARRON
 THE EAGLE-GAZETTE STAFF

LANCASTER — Jacob Spears found something to knock out drugs — Police Athletic League boxing.

"Boxing has definitely taught me how to keep clean and stay away from bad influences," the 14-year-old said.

Spears was at Saturday's Hope Without Dope community block party downtown at Broad and Main streets where

the PAL was manning a display table.

"When I go to the Police Athletic League, it helps me cope with my anger," Spears said of the PAL amateur boxing program. "Because instead of taking it out on people on the street, I can go in there and take it out with my buddies in the ring. It helps me stay out of trouble. It keeps me in shape, and it's getting me ready for basketball season. It's really beneficial. It's helped me a lot in several ways."

The PAL boxing gym is at the Robert K. Fox Family YMCA RecPlex at 1180 E. Locus St. Membership is \$20 per month or free for those who can't afford it. The PAL works with the city police department and the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office.

Program director Jamey Mathias said there are about 25 boxers in the boxing program, which runs for two hours a day Monday through Thursday. "If we're concerned about taking care of our body, putting the right things in it and not putting the wrong things in

it, everything else kind of takes care of itself," Mathias said. "So be concerned about eating the right stuff, not smoking, not doing drugs, just making our body as good as it can be — that kind of takes away from all the other things around us."

He said there is no question that boxing can help keep young people off drugs.

"We've got speakers come in and talk about drugs with kids," Mathias said.

See **PAL**, Page 8A

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To send flowers to the family, please visit [www.Obituaries.com](#). Click on obituaries.

George Alva Bennett Shumaker



PLEASANTVILLE: George Alva Bennett Shumaker 92 of Pleasantville, Ohio passed away Thursday, August 27, 2015 at the Picking House. He was born on September 7, 1922 in Hocking Township, Fairfield County and raised in the Cedar Heights and Pierce Ave. areas in Lancaster. George had two brothers, Morton and Bill and three sisters, Bertha, Izle and Josephine. His parents were James Franklin and Mary Izle (Waites) Shumaker. During the "Great Depression" any type of work was hard earned. George had gardens, ran errands for stores, sang gospel songs at various gatherings, mid-wife assisted and even engaged in boxing matches to earn change for income.

In 1943, George met his "Love" Marjorie Marie. He was drafted into the US Army during World War II. When the war ended, George and Marjorie purchased their 3 room house at the edge of Pleasantville.

In 1947, George and three other local men pooled some money together and purchased an old farm truck. He converted it into a fire truck and The Pleasantville Fire Department was operational. George turned the Fire Chief position down twice—saying "he wanted to be on the lines with the other guys". George has taught many of trainees to become a "real" fire fighter. Until recently, you could catch George, coffee cup in hand, watching the younger guys clean the trucks, including that red 1941 Ford Flat Head 8 fire truck at the Pleasant Twp. Fire Station at Coonpath Rd. and St. Rt. #188.

He was known as "Pappy" or Dad Shumaker to the crews, he was always ready to listen to a problem or roll some fire hose. Just naming some higher ups fire personnel would bring a smile to his face, knowing that at some time in the past 65 years plus years, he had "taught them a thing or two about fighting fires or calming a child at a automobile accident.

The Shumaker's backyard became a Go-Kart track in the summer and the place for Halloween "full costume" parties and bond fires. You never knew who from which fire department had arrived until late evening.

George's and Marjorie's front door was always open. The kitchen table had enough room for one, two or three more chairs to share in the evening meal. Marjorie worked at the local I.G.A. store, so she knew when a family was in need. Many baskets of fresh food along with a couple pairs of shoes for children, would find its way to their doorstep. Praise the Lord for healthy gardens and the local shoe cobbler.

George officially retired from Owens Corning after 40 years, but also worked for Karl McCune Tractor Sales, Ray Nesser Plumbing, Newton Electrical, Bill Lane Trucking, drove a Pleasantville school bus, and the Olivedale Senior Citizens Trip Bus, where Marjorie served as a Paramedic on-board.

George was a member of the American Legion Ross George Post #9, REACT, Honey Creek Go-Kart Club, Olivedale Senior Citizens Center, Malibu Grand Prix Race Team, Big Jim C.B. Network-Handle (Lonesome George).

He is survived by his daughter, Pat, sons, Dale (Shirley), Floyd "Skip", Rick (Lona), Jeff (Vivian), 10 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marjorie, son, Chuck, granddaughter, Carri, parents, brothers, and sisters.

Pat and family would like to thank The Summit Rehabilitation Center, FairHope Hospice and the Carlin Houses in Logan for their caring assistance during George's stay. God Bless You All!

Funeral service will be held Wednesday, September 2, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. in the FRANK E. SMITH FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL, 405 N. COLUMBUS ST., LANCASTER, OHIO 43130. George will be laid to rest next to his wife, Marjorie at Hampton Cemetery, Pleasantville with the Pleasant Township Fire Department firefighters conducting the honor guard and burial detail at the cemetery. Friends may visit Tuesday from 2-4 & 6-8 p.m. at the funeral home.

George asked that any donations be sent to The Pleasant Twp. Fire Department, Firemen Equipment Fund, 2925 Lancaster-Thornville Rd. NE, Lancaster, Ohio 43130 or Meals on Wheels of Fairfield County, 253 Boving Rd., Lancaster, Ohio 43130.

To send an online condolence, and sign the guestbook, please visit [www.funeralhome.com](#).

Share your **condolences** on our Web site. Click on **obituaries.**

LOCAL WEATHER

TODAY
 HIGH: 84
 LOW: 62
 A t-storm in spots

MONDAY
 HIGH: 85
 LOW: 63
 A t-storm in the area

TUESDAY
 HIGH: 88
 LOW: 64
 Partly sunny

WEDNESDAY
 HIGH: 87
 LOW: 63
 Clouds and sun

THURSDAY
 HIGH: 88
 LOW: 63
 Sunny, warm and humid

ALMANAC
 Through 4 p.m. yesterday
 TEMPERATURES
 High.....86
 Low.....52

PRECIPITATION
 24 hrs.....0.00"

SUN & MOON
 Today's sunrise/sunset:
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 Today's moonrise/moonset:
 8:41 p.m./7:52 a.m.

Last New First Full
 Sep 5 Sep 13 Sep 21 Sep 27

NATIONAL EXTREMES
 Imperial, CA.....112°
 Leadville, CO.....34°

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LOTTERIES

SATURDAY'S NUMBERS
 Pick 3 (D): 6-8-8
 Pick 4 (D): 7-6-7-9
 Pick 5 (D): 9-3-3-4-8
 Classic Lotto: 4-7-11-14-37-48
 Kickers: 2-8-4-4-8-7
 Rolling Cash 5: 3-13-14-32-35
 Pick 3: 8-8-4
 Pick 4: 2-4-9-7
 Pick 5: 6-8-2-5-4

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Virginia (Hueckel) Maurer
 LANCASTER: Virginia (Hueckel) Maurer, age 93, passed away Thursday August 27, 2015 at Picking House in Lancaster. Member of American Legion Auxiliary and Lady Lions of Millersport.
 Preceded in death by husband, George, son, James; parents, Edward and Florence Hueckel; and brother, Edward Hueckel.
 Survived by children, George (Becky), David (Diane), Ann (Dan) Smith; grandchildren, Jill Tait, James (Shaun) Klein, Geoff Maurer, Jodi Maurer, Jimmy (Jennifer) Maurer, Amanda Maurer, Lynn (Shaun) Phillips; 16 great grandchildren; one great-great granddaughter; nieces and nephews; and the loving staff at Sterling House of Lancaster.
 Family will receive friends 4-8pm Monday at the MAEDER-QUINT-TIBERI Funeral Home, 1068 S. High St., Columbus, OH 43206. Prayer service 7:30pm. Friends and family will meet for Mass of Christian Burial 11am Tuesday at Saint Mary of the Assumption Church, 132 S. High St., Lancaster, OH 43130. Burial St. Joseph Cemetery. To view and sign the on-line register, visit [www.MaederQuintTiberi.com](#)



ELISE MANAHAN-CANNETT OHIO Chillicothe residents held a march in an effort to bring everyone together to fight against addiction and crime.

Sex shopping.
Small town sex sales
 Summer in Zanesville has been a growing time for the sex business, according to police Chief Ken Miller. Complaints of prostitution have increased 14 percent this year with 66 percent of 105 complaints coming since June.
 "They've been known to hop in your vehicle at a red light," Miller said. "They're desperate. They're out trying to fuel their drug habit, most of them."
 Lancaster police Capt. Dan Shupp said visible prostitution in his community is "pretty rare" and there aren't complaints from residents about it either.
 "We have had some problems in the past with the occasional escort service call that has gone

Columbus man accused of threatening woman with ax

STAFF REPORT
 LANCASTER — Police arrested a Columbus man after his girlfriend said he was trying to attack her with an ax in the 100 block of Allen Street early Saturday morning.
 The police report listed no injuries in the 3:30 a.m. incident, in which the man said he became upset after people were at his girlfriend's house. He said he did not have an ax with him during the incident.
 The report said police held the man at gunpoint until he was handcuffed.

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He is survived by his daughter, Pat, sons, Dale (Shirley), Floyd "Skip", Rick (Lona), Jeff (Vivian), 10 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marjorie, son, Chuck, granddaughter, Carri, parents, brothers, and sisters.

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Stolen

Continued from Page 1A

once they returned.

"We're the fourth house that's been robbed on this road," she said, recalling other recent incidents.

The Lerches also have a \$1,000 insurance deductible to replace stolen items, which is a costly avenue that seemed unappealing to the couple who feel victimized by the system and the burglar.

Richard and Bonnie, and likely many other burglary victims, are told by local law enforcement that, if their items are found at a pawnshop and can be rightly identified as their property, they will have to buy it back from the pawnbroker. That isn't the law.

The Eagle-Gazette began looking into local law enforcement and pawnshop procedure to return stolen goods to the rightful owner, which matched from agency to agency but did not match the Ohio Revised Code, which mandates something else entirely.

The law?

Lindsay Burnworth, public information officer for the Ohio Department of Commerce, explained Section 4727.12 of Ohio Revised Code, clearing up confusion with the law:

"If the chief or sheriff receives a report that property has been stolen and then determines the identity of the true owner of the allegedly stolen property that is held by a licensee (or pawnbroker), and informs the licensee of the true owner's identity, the licensee may restore the allegedly stolen property to the true owner directly," Burnworth said.

Burnworth clarified that the words "may restore" creates a gray area, giving the pawnbroker an option to give the item back free of charge or face the true owners in civil court if they opt to sue, which she said they have every right to under the law.

"If a licensee fails to restore the allegedly stolen property, the true owner may recover the property from the licensee in an action at law," she continued. "The owner can also include recovering attorney fees and costs in court proceedings."

Burnworth said the latter portion of the law stating that the true owner can seek recouping attorney fees and court costs is in place so the true owner could go to court over a \$20 item, not just a priceless heirloom or a high-priced item.

She said a lot of times people will say it's not worth going to court because of attorney and court costs. That problem in the law makes the hassle of a civil lawsuit more appealing to the true owner.

The Lerches were surprised to hear that was actually the law and what their options were. They were told by detectives that they would have to pay to get their items back if their property was ever identified on a pawnshop's shelves.

When The Eagle-Gazette asked the Lancaster Police Department and Fairfield County Sheriff's Office what their procedure is when a stolen item is discovered at a pawnshop, they had an entirely different policy and one that favored pawnshops, not the victim.

Both police agencies have the same policy:

"If an item is determined stolen, there is a hold placed on the item. Once the case is finished or it is photographed and released by law enforcement before conviction, the true owner is notified that they must pay what the pawnshop paid to get their item back.

Local pawnshops, including employees at Lev's Pawn Shop on East Main Street, whom The Eagle-Gazette interviewed for this story, all abide by this policy, even though the Ohio Revised Code does not state anything about a property owner buying back their items for any amount.

Not only do property owners not have to pay to get their items back, Burnworth said, but pawnbrokers also can take the person who sold them the stolen item to civil court to recoup their losses.

What went wrong



Brett Pingle starts the process of entering a new item into the computer system at Lev's Pawn Shop in Lancaster. Pawnshop employees recommend that people make lists of and photograph the serial numbers of their belongings to make retrieving them easier if stolen.

Proving ownership

Investigators and pawnshops give a list of tips for property owners to help identify their items if stolen.

- » Keep meticulous records, including photographs, in printed form in case a computer is stolen.
- » Write down serial numbers, descriptions of items and take pictures. There are serial numbers on a variety of valuables, including guns, tools, bicycles, electronics and even some jewelry.
- » Report all stolen items to police.
- » Police often tell victims to search pawnshops for their items; however, if an item is spotted, go to the police department to investigate and place a hold on the item. A pawnshop will not discuss the item with the victim directly.
- » For items that do not have a serial number, detectives suggest getting an identifier on the item.

2014 statistics

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

- » 89 breaking & entering
- » 159 felony-theft thefts

Lancaster Police Department

- » 66 burglaries/breaking and entering
- » 93 felony-theft thefts

SOURCE: LANCASTER POLICE DEPARTMENT AND FAIRFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

After learning the real law when it comes to recouping stolen items at pawnshops, The Eagle-Gazette went back to local law enforcement to track down where this breakdown occurred.

What was discovered is a flaw in how detectives are trained. Lancaster police detective Dan Thomas said he was told by the prosecutor's office that prosecutors like having only one victim in a case. If the pawnbroker was in charge of recouping their losses in a criminal case, that would mean there are two victims.

"That's the way we were told to do it," Thomas said. "Like Thomas, sheriff's office detective bureau Lt. Tim Voris said both agencies operate under the "guidance of the prosecutor's office."

Fairfield County Prosecutor Gregg Marx said he has never set up a policy stating law enforcement should give victims incorrect information about how to retrieve their items. However, he did say one victim is ideal in a criminal case because restitution has its own laws set forth in the Ohio Revised Code.

"It's a more complex issue when you start putting in restitution," Marx said. However, based on the Ohio Revised Code, recouping losses for pawnbrokers can go through civil court and bypass the criminal system completely.

Despite the law's complexities, Marx said, he is aware it is an issue. He cited high turnover and investigators' large caseloads and possibly improper training as some of the reason the breakdown occurs.

"That's one of 50 problems," Marx said. "It would be nice if there was a solution."

Voris said he does believe all law enforcement is invested in improving

the process for victims and helping get their items returned. Marx agreed, saying there is a lot of new local legislation and positive changes are possible.

The law also changes somewhat frequently. However, this particular law has been in place for nearly 14 years.

"It's been an evolving statute over my entire career," Marx said.

This version of the law took effect in 2001, which Marx said was long before he became county prosecutor. Marx also said the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office Detective Bureau requested a meeting with him to discuss the issue of how victims are handled in burglary cases when their items are sold to pawnshops. He said the email came a couple of weeks ago, which is about the same time The Eagle-Gazette began pursuing this report.

Voris said the timing was coincidental because improving the recovery process for victims has been a long-time discussion.

"This is an issue that we'll look at," Marx said.

When Marx was asked about receiving any complaints about the pawnshop procedure, he said that he doesn't remember many within the past four years but that it's possible officers have deflected some of the complaints.

Collaboration

According to the Ohio Pawnbrokers Association, less than half of 1 percent of pawned merchandise is identified as stolen.

"That's because customers must provide positive identification and a complete description of the merchandise," according to the association's website, OhioPawnbrokers.org. "This information is then regularly transmitted to law enforcement, which dramatically decreases the likelihood that a thief would bring stolen merchandise to a pawn shop."

Fairfield County sheriff's detective Bryan Kohler said law enforcement has a good working relationship with local pawnshops.

Lev's Pawn Shop employees said detectives routinely talk to them about items brought in, all of which is uploaded to a database complete with the item's serial number and identification of the person who sold it to them. Lev's manager, Anthony Maybin, said the database is a key tool for investigators and one that helps solve crimes.

Pawnshops are regulated and held to a different standard than other second-hand shops, which aren't required to track sale records as pawnshops do.

"They're not under the same obligation," Maybin said. Once the items are uploaded to the database, police may place a hold on an item if there is suspicion that it was stolen. Maybin said that Lev's averages a couple of holds a month but that it's somewhat infrequent.

Pawnshops also are obligated to forgo buying any items believed to be stolen. Maybin said he is careful when it comes to buying items and will ban people from the store if they come under police suspicion.

Generally, he said, a lot of Lev's business is people looking for quick loans. However, he said, burglary victims have come to the shop and paid to get their items back.

Maybin, who has been in the pawn business for five years, including two years at the Lancaster location, said most people are "usually happy to get their stuff back," and he doesn't recall many local people complaining about paying to recover their items.

In Columbus, people are a lot more aggressive," he said.

Maybin said it can create a problem for law enforcement and their cooperation with police agencies if pawnshops are forced to give back the victims' items for free and be out the money. Pawnshops often help officers in tracking down thieves through various means, he said, but they would likely be less helpful if it meant losing money.

Victimized twice

Deb Nisley was one of those victims venturing into an area business that bought her stolen jewelry — jewelry valued at \$2,000 — that could not be replaced by insurance money or by buying something new.

It was her engagement and wedding rings and other jewelry given to her by her late husband, who had died a year before the 2011 break-in.

The man who broke into Nisley's Pleasant Township home and pleaded guilty to charges related to the burglary in October 2011 knew Nisley and her home well. He broke in through a window when she wasn't home and took cherished jewelry from her collection and her late husband's, including his wedding ring.

"My husband died, and that stuff will never be replaced. It has sentimental value to me, but I know pawnshops don't care about that," said Nisley, who is still bothered by the ordeal.

Some of the items were tracked down, and police placed a hold on the items until the case came to a close. When Nisley wanted to retrieve her items, they had already been sold. She was able to buy back only one piece of her wedding ring, as the setting had already been melted down. Only the diamond of her engagement ring remained, which she paid \$750 to get back.

"I didn't get anything else back," Nisley said. "It's a very, very sad thing."

Nisley said she was revictimized when she was required to buy her diamond back, but she had no other option.

She did consult an attorney about what had happened but was told she could never win against the pawn business. She said one of the major problems, even though there was a conviction in the case, is proving that the item is yours.

"You must have some serious documentation," she said.

Along with losing the irreplaceable jewelry, she said, she also still has a feeling of violation that someone she knew entered her home and took things knowing they were important to her.

Nisley still has a sense of fear. The Lerches, who have come to realize they will never get their items back, have that same sense of fear. The feeling of security is something they want back more than any of their stolen goods.

Richard Lerch carried a gun around for a couple of days but grew tired of it.

"Who wants to carry around a gun with you all the time?" Richard asked. "Who wants to be walking to shoot anyone over any way?"

Bonnie Lerch is still startled from the break-in, even though she never saw the perpetrator. She became visibly upset when the sound of a far-off gunshot hit her ears while talking to The Eagle-Gazette outside her home on Aug. 17 last year after the burglary.

"We lock the door even when both of us are here," she said. "When it happens to you, it's completely different than when it happens to someone else." The Lerches have already added extra security to their home.

"It's going to take a while to get over it," Lerch said.

And even when they do, the stolen items are probably never coming back.

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Twitter: @SpencerRoushLGG

Prostitution

Continued from Page 2A

bad, but as far as street walkers, we haven't had much of that," he said.

Mansfield police recently surveyed a handful of women prostituting and discovered most had been doing it for less than a year and were using drugs, typically heroin. Nearly half responded if they could stop using drugs, they would stop prostituting.

Clouded judgment from drug use and limited access to drug treatment options in rural areas can make stopping difficult.

While new laws cracking down on pill mills led addicts to seek heroin, a law in 2012 making it harder to sell stolen metals may have encouraged rural prostitution. As scrap metal dealers shifted to comply with the law, that's when rural police started seeing women selling themselves on the street, said T.J. Hollis, commander of a task force investigating Chillicothe's missing women cases.

"We started to hear about it from our partners all around the state. They were seeing the same things (prostitution), so

I don't think it was unique to us, but I think it became a symptom of what was going on with the addiction in Ohio and around the country," Hollis said.

No separate tracking

Washburn said they don't separately track complaints of prostitution in Chillicothe — they're often lumped in with other reports of suspicious persons or disorderly conduct. However, they believe most of the women who are prostituting are doing it on their own as a result of their addiction or, sometimes, to also support a partner's addiction. And the trade isn't always for money, sometimes it's in exchange for drugs.

The full scope of the issue in Ohio and the nation is difficult to ascertain, but data collection is a goal of the governor's task force on human trafficking that was created in 2012. Of the 321 people identified as trafficked victims by state agencies in 2014, the majority were trafficked for sex and of those whose ages were reported, 60 percent were adults, according to the task force's July report.

It's unclear the complete nature of cases included in the numbers since the definition of trafficking can vary and sometimes includes all forms of prostitution, even instances where a woman

may not have someone forcing her to prostitute.

There is no statewide database of prostitution arrests. Prostitution charges typically are misdemeanors and don't garner prison time. Over the last five years, about 245 people were sent to prison on prostitution related charges with nearly 60 percent being for importing, which involves soliciting sexual conduct with minors, according to sex offense commitment data from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections.

Drugs + sex work = danger

Drug use is dangerous enough on its own — at least 2,110 Ohioans died of drug overdoses, mostly involving pain pills and heroin, in 2013 — and it increases the inherent dangers that often come with prostitution.

Chillicothe, where drug overdoses more than doubled between 2013 and 2014, has begrudgingly become the newest poster child of what addiction is doing to women who straddle both worlds.

The stories of six women who went missing since Mar. 2014 have transfixed the community; four have been found dead, at least one of a drug overdose, and two, Wanda Lemons, 37, and Charlotte Trego,

27, remain missing.

"The information we have learned ... is that they were all in an addicted lifestyle. And part of the way to facilitate that was to engage in human trafficking," Hollis said. "That seems to be the common denominator: lifestyles."

Since the story went national, that lifestyle factor has led families and law enforcement across the country to reach out about similar cases, Hollis said. People on social media in Chillicothe often post similar missing women cases from various rural towns, including a case where the body of Rebekah Leicy, 31, of Mansfield, who had died of a drug overdose, was found in March propped against a tree in Ashland County.

Some women use drugs before going out on the street or meeting a person for sex, said Katie Hall-Jares, a national Sex Workers Outreach Project board member. Drug use can make them less aware of dangers, which worsens when drug use continues with the client, which sometimes means more money, she added.

"Women who have an overlap between drug use and sex work tend to work alone more than women who

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Drugs

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don't," Jares said.

That isolation creates another layer of danger. According to a study of mortality in prostituted women tracked for 30 years in Colorado, women actively prostituting were 18 times more likely to be murdered than women their age who weren't. Their leading causes of death were homicide, overdoses and accidents.

In 1999 and 2000, a study of 325 women prostituting in Miami, Florida, and using heroin and/or cocaine revealed 42 percent had encountered violent dates within the past year; 25 percent had been beaten, 13 percent had been raped, and 14 percent had been threatened with a weapon.

The violence accompanying prostitution isn't relegated to the big cities. Nearly a third of those surveyed by Mansfield police said they had been robbed by a customer and another third said they had been sexually assaulted.

In Zanesville, police added a community intervention officer to the mid-night shift because of an increase in late night inju-

ries that has accompanied the increased prostitution, Miller said. Most of the time, though, assaults and rapes are not reported because the woman fears being arrested for prostituting, Washburn said. Police often hear about the incidents through social media or glean that's the case on calls where a woman declines discussing how she was injured.

"If they don't report it, there's nothing we can do. And a lot of these assaults have been pretty severe," Washburn said.

"If a guy knows he can get away with this, to go out and pick up a prostitute and then assault her physically and sexually with no repercussion, then what's going to happen next time? ... We're not going to arrest somebody who is injured in a case like that. I want to get the violent criminal off the street."

Grasping for solutions

Changing attitudes is among the biggest focuses in Chillicothe as law enforcement has begun piecing together a plan to combat prostitution. Like many other departments across the nation, community policing is on the tips of tongues and officers are being encouraged to develop relationships.

"You have to treat ev-

erybody like a person. Just because these ladies are committing crimes doesn't mean they're any less human than anybody else," Washburn said.

"No one ever grew up saying, 'I want to be a drug addict.' No one ever grew up saying, 'I want to be a prostitute and be at risk for being assaulted or killed,'" Hollis noted.

But finding help in rural Ohio can be a challenge. Although publicly supported outpatient drug treatment services have increased in rural communities, detox, inpatient treatment and residential services are options in only about a third of counties, typically in metropolitan areas, according to data from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

In Mansfield, a recent prostitution sting was focused on getting the women arrested into counseling and drug treatment programs.

"Rather than just process these girls out, giving them a plea deal, and then having them back out on the street again, it's more about trying to drill down to each individual girl and see what it is we can do to help that particular person and prevent them from wanting to go back out there or being forced back out there," said

Mansfield Police Chief Kenny Coontz.

But there continues to be promises of arrests and pressure to move prostitution somewhere else. Earlier this year, Chillicothe officials removed most of the benches from the downtown area in an effort to remove one thing used to signal if a woman was working.

"The goal we have is to take them off through covert operations, undercover buys, and then to try to move them out of the city, make it where there's no place safe (from law enforcement) for them to practice," Washburn said.

Gannett Ohio reporters Lou Whitmire and Eric Lagata contributed to this report.

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PAL

Continued from Page 1A

"We preach community service, leadership and, of course, staying off drugs."

There are another 20 to 25 people involved in other PAL programs besides boxing.

PAL also sponsors various community service

projects, such as picking up trash and cleaning up throughout the city. It also takes members to professional boxing matches and other events.

The PAL boxing program is not just for kids, however. Mathias said a 56-year-old woman does not box in competition but comes to gym for workouts.

Police officer Chris Caton said boxing gives

kids a chance to do something other than get into mischief.

"It gives them a goal to strive for," he said. "It gives them something to be proud of and people they don't want to let down. Jamey would be one of those people. They think a lot of him."

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