



Today: Partly sunny, warm; a strong p.m. t-storm
High: 92
Low: 67
Details: A2

\$2

June 28, 2009

Sunday NEWS SENTINEL

Knoxville

KnoxNews.com

STILL MANY QUESTIONS

Michael Jackson's family reportedly wants a private autopsy of the pop icon because of unanswered questions about how he died and the doctor who was with him. **A4**

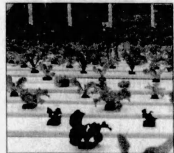


IN LOCAL

MYSTERIES OF THE MISSING

A new series begins today looking at past and recent disappearances of Tennesseans. **B1**

IN BUSINESS



HIGH-TECH HARVEST

Maybe you can fool Mother Nature. Growing season is all year long, with new tools for raising crops, such as hydroponics and specially equipped greenhouses. **C1**

IN SPORTS

SECONDARY SITUATION

The talk is of UT's football program piling up NCAA secondary violations since Lane Kiffin took over as coach. So where do the Vols rank among SEC schools? **D1**

IN LIFE



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

"No helmet, no headphones, it's just you and the wind." That's how Linwood Stevenson describes floating through the air in an engineless glider. We take a glide as part of our "No More Than Four" series on short vacation ideas close to home. **E3**

FIRST IN A THREE-PART SERIES

hooked

local prostitutes



PHOTOS BY ADAM BRIMER/NEWS SENTINEL

Knoxville Police Sgt. Chris Bell, left, asks Tiffany Sharp, center, about a bag of wet cigarette butts found in her purse as she is being arrested on a prostitution charge during a sting operation by the Police Department near Magnolia Avenue on April 29. Officer Nikki Caldwell is behind Sharp.

BY J.J. STAMBAUGH
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Jennifer, a 25-year-old hooker who walks the streets of East and North Knoxville for a living, dresses for work in patched-up blue jeans and a red jacket, her blond hair tied back in a red scrunchy.

She looks nothing like the Hollywood stereotype of a prostitute — few of the 500-plus women and men arrested for selling themselves in Knoxville over the past five years do — but she pulls no punches in describing what she does for a living.

"I charge \$30 for (oral sex), but most of the time people don't want to pay more than \$20," says Jennifer, who only agreed to be interviewed on the condition that her last name not be used. "Usually it's first thing in the morning or during lunch or 4 to 5 in the afternoon. After that, it's mostly black guys who try to pick you up, give you (crack) rocks."

Jennifer is a typical Knoxville streetwalker. Addicted to crack and pain pills, she meanders through the residential neighborhoods that parallel Magnolia Avenue and Central Street waiting for men to flag her down. Every day, she faces the possibility of being jailed, raped or killed in order to raise the quick cash she needs to support her drug habit.

Women such as Jennifer pose a seemingly intractable social problem, authorities say. There is little in the way of rehabilitation to offer them, they continue to break the law no matter how many times they are arrested, and they often meet their deaths through violence or disease.

See **PROSTITUTION** on **A12**



Millie Hill removes her shoes so that Officer Caldwell can check them for contraband after Hill was arrested on charges of prostitution during a sting operation conducted by the Knoxville Police Department near Central Street on April 29.

HOOKED: SEX FOR SALE IN EAST TENNESSEE

■ **Today:** Among Tennessee cities, Knoxville has a higher arrest rate for streetwalkers, driven by drugs and the thrill of the trick

■ **Monday:** Anonymous and prosperous: Why escort services thrive in East Tennessee

■ **Tuesday:** Area sex trade workers pose serious syphilis and HIV threats to population at large

Knoxville leads state in prostitution busts

KPD files charges at double the rate of Nashville, five times Chattanooga police

BY J.J. STAMBAUGH
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Knoxville led the state last year in the number of per capita prostitution-related arrests and citations, with police charging offenders at a higher rate than in larger cities such as Nashville and Memphis.

In 2008, Knoxville Police Department officers filed charges at roughly double the rate of police in Nashville, slightly more than those in Memphis and at five times the rate of police in Chattanooga.

What the numbers can't offer is whether there has been an upsurge in the number of hookers working locally, if the high arrest rate is the result of aggressive enforcement, or perhaps a mixture of both.

Since 2004, at least 525 people — mostly women — have been arrested or cited at least once in Knoxville for selling sex, according to court records. Another 257 people — mostly men — have been charged with buying it.

See **POLICE** on **A14**



Arrests, citations have little effect on problem

BY J.J. STAMBAUGH
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Some streetwalkers may be arrested dozens of times during the course of their careers, but they rarely spend more than a few hours or days behind bars at a time, court records show.

In fact, they are often issued a citation in lieu of arrest, and some even make bond in time to be arrested again the next day.

"It's just the price of doing business," said Kevin Teeters, a prosecutor with the Knox County District Attorney General's Office. "It just doesn't mean anything to them."

Under Tennessee law, buying or selling sex is a Class B misdemeanor punishable by a maximum of six months behind bars with no mandatory fine, Teeters said. If it takes place near a church or school, it becomes a Class A misdemeanor that carries 11

BY THE NUMBERS

257 People in Knox County charged with patronizing a prostitute from Jan. 1, 2004, to April 29 of this year

426 People charged from Jan. 1, 1999, to April 29 of this year

525 People charged with prostitution from Jan. 1, 2004, to April 29 of this year

711 People charged from Jan. 1, 1999, to April 29 of this year

Source: Knox County Criminal Justice Information Management System

months and 29 days in jail with a seven-day minimum sentence and a \$1,000 fine.

Most cases, however, are pleaded to a lesser offense and

unsupervised probation in lieu of jail, Teeters said.

Over the past five years, at least 782 people have been arrested or cited for more than 1,700 prostitution-related charges that have passed through Knox County General Sessions Court, according to court records.

Many offenders get charged only once or twice before dropping off the system's radar. Others become permanent fixtures in local courtrooms, records show.

Knoxville's 11 most cited or arrested prostitutes — with at least 10 tickets or arrests since 2004 — have racked up 459 criminal charges over their lifetimes.

In addition to prostitution, their records also reveal scores of other charges including drugs, theft, disorderly conduct and public intoxication.

The two most-charged offend-

ers are Lola Lakisha Garrett, 31, and Kimberly Elizabeth Stewart, 35, according to court documents. Their records are strikingly similar, with each woman having been cited or arrested 20 times for prostitution in addition to a slew of other offenses that suggest severe problems with substance abuse as well as the rough-and-tumble nature of life on the streets.

Some prostitutes, like 36-year-old Linda Shropshire, have amassed large public debts through court costs and fines that they have little, if any, ability to pay. Records show Shropshire owes more than \$25,000 to the courts and — as of her last arrest in March — had paid \$610 and was only able to make \$15 monthly payments.

KPD Lt. Dusty Lane, who regularly helps organize prostitution stings, said officers have discre-

tion about jailing a prostitute or issuing a citation. In recent months, however, there has been more of an effort to actually ensure they spend some time behind bars, especially during KPD's frequent undercover stings along Magnolia Avenue and Central Street.

"We used to cite the girls a lot and let them go," Lane said. "But as soon as we let them go they'd tell everybody that we're here. Citing them is not a deterrent."

KPD Sgt. Chris Bell believes that probation is a waste of time and cited as an example a recent sting operation in which a woman offered to perform a sex act on an undercover officer as she was walking to see her probation officer.

"It's always the same girls, over and over again," Bell said.

J.J. Stambaugh may be reached at 865-342-6307.

MOST PROSTITUTION-RELATED CHARGES IN KNOX COUNTY



SUNNY DAWN GRAVES
Age: 31
Incidents resulting in arrest or citations: 49
Charges: 62
Prostitution-related charges: 16



PAMELA LOUISE WILLIAMS
Age: 42
Incidents resulting in arrest or citations: 95
Charges: 70
Prostitution-related charges: 17



LOLA LAKISHA GARRETT
Age: 31
Incidents resulting in arrest or citations: 59
Charges: 82
Prostitution-related charges: 20



KIMBERLY ELIZABETH STEWART
Age: 35
Incidents resulting in arrest or citations: 59
Charges: 73
Prostitution-related charges: 20



TERESA SUNDAY GRUBB
Age: 37
Incidents resulting in arrest or citations: 45
Charges: 50
Prostitution-related charges: 28

Source: Knox County court system



Rachel Bozeman is led toward custody by Officer Nikki Caldwell after Bozeman was arrested and charged with prostitution near Magnolia Avenue on April 29.

PROSTITUTION

from A1

Like other local streetwalkers, Jennifer plies her trade in cars, alleys and the occasional motel room. She's careful to stay close to the illegal drug markets that flourish nearby, familiar corners where crack is available at all hours of the day and night.

She describes her customers as "like normal people" except for their urge to engage in an illicit sexual act on the way to work or during their lunch break.

Jennifer, arrested five times for hooking over the past two years, describes a life scarred repeatedly by violence. She says that the father of her 9-year-old daughter is doing a life sentence for murder, and during her time as a prostitute she has been both raped and beaten by customers.

She turned her first trick when she was '19 or 20.' She has learned a thing or two about addiction along the way, including the fact that drugs are only part of the attraction of the streets.

"It's kind of addicting out here, to see where the next person is going to take you," she says. "They may take you shopping, or to a hotel. You don't know. You meet crazy people, and you meet nice people."

"It's hard to do this and then go do a minimum wage job doing \$100 or \$200 a week when you can make that in a day."

'All about the crack'

On a map, the geographic world inhabited by Knoxville's streetwalkers resembles a labyrinth of side streets and alleys slicing through East and North Knoxville.

The neighborhoods have served as Knoxville's unofficial red-light districts for decades. The main hubs are easily identifiable as Magnolia Avenue, the downtown bus terminal and Old Gray Cemetery.

Knoxville Police Department Officer Scott Noe, who regularly patrols the streets most favored by working girls and "johns," says very little has changed since he first donned his blue uniform more than eight years ago.

There seems to be no end to the procession of women who find themselves on the street. Noe doesn't claim to have any hard-and-fast solution to the problem, but he believes the root cause is easy to identify.

"It's all about the crack," he says, referring to the highly addictive, ready-to-smoke form of cocaine that first became widely available in Knoxville a generation ago. "They maybe started out rebelling against parents, or as runaways.... There may be one you won't see for a long time, and then there will be a stressor and they're back hooking for crack. It's sad."

See PROSTITUTION on A13

"It's hard to do this and then go do a minimum wage job doing \$100 or \$200 a week when you can make that in a day."

Jennifer,
a 25-year-old hooker

ON KNOXNEWS.COM

■ **Video:** On the front lines of a KPD prostitution sting, riding the streets with KPD officer Scott Noe

■ **Gallery:** Top prostitution offenders in Knox County; Knoxville prostitution sting

■ **Searchable databases:** Records showing people arrested on prostitution, patronizing prostitution charges in Knox County from 1999-2009

MORE

■ Knoxville Police Chief Sterling P. Owen IV calls on the public to help in cracking down on prostitution in the city. **F3**



A razor blade and crack pipe were found on Tiffany Shartp after her arrest on a prostitution charge on April 29.

ADAM BRIMER/NEWS SENTINEL



PHOTOS BY ADAM BRIMER/NEWS SENTINEL
 Patricia Ann Gist, left, searches her bra for a crack pipe after telling Officer Nikki Caldwell, right, she had one in her possession after she was arrested and charged with prostitution near Magnolia Avenue on April 29. A pipe was not found.

Jail sentence not the answer, lawyers say

BY J.J. STAMBAUGH
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None of Jamie Niland's clients seem set to be a prostitute. "Nobody grows up thinking they're going to grow up and commit this kind of crime. It's almost like they've given up," said Niland, who represents indigent defendants through the Knox County Public Defender's Office.

According to Niland, the courts can't effectively cope with the hundreds of women who have been caught selling sex over the past few years. Trying to jail them all would likely cause the system to grind to a halt, she said, a fact that looms large in the process of deciding how individual cases are resolved.

Many women who are caught hooking near churches or schools, for instance, take plea bargains to a lesser offense and avoid the seven-day mandatory jail term that would have come with a conviction on the original charge, she said.

"There are so many of these cases, I don't know how the jail would handle seven days of confinement on these charges," she said.

While some may feel morally repulsed by streetwalkers, Niland believes a more appropriate response is pity. She pointed out the most basic elements of their job require them to take risks that other women wouldn't dream of.

"How many women can get into a car with a stranger without a thought for their safety?" she said.

Niland is critical of some police tactics, especially the many undercover vice stings conducted by the Knoxville Police Department where male police officers drive around picking up women.

"Most of these women don't have transportation, they walk everywhere," she said. "I think these women see an easy opportunity to make some money. And once these women are known as prostitutes, they seem to be stopped all the time."

"Once they are known, they have a really hard time

TENNESSEE PROSTITUTION-RELATED ARRESTS, 2004-08

- **2004:** 1,526 (1,502 adults, 24 juveniles); arrests for felony promoting prostitution: 56
- **2005:** 1,972 (1,948 adults, 24 juveniles); arrests for felony promoting prostitution: 53
- **2006:** 2,078 (2,059 adults, 19 juveniles); arrests for felony promoting prostitution: 67
- **2007:** 2,165 (2,128 adults, 37 juveniles); arrests for felony promoting prostitution: 59 (56 adults, 3 juveniles)
- **2008:** 2,066 (2,041 adults, 25 juveniles); arrests for felony promoting prostitution: 56 (55 adults, 1 juvenile)

Source: Tennessee Bureau of Investigation annual crime reports

going about their business and just existing."

According to John Gill, special counsel to Knox County District Attorney General Randy Nichols, locking up streetwalkers for long periods of time would likely prove financially unsound. Like Niland, Gill said that such an approach would fail to address what drives women onto the streets in the first place.

Gill laments the fact that Knoxville has no dedicated social programs to help prostitutes overcome their problems, although he hopes the alcohol and drug treatment program operated through the Knox County Detention Facility will eventually provide some of the women help.

Despite the close association between drugs and streetwalking, however, it's misleading to lay the blame entirely on crack cocaine, the drug of choice for most local streetwalkers, he said.

"Typically, you have women that have been physically or sexually abused, often as children, or are coming out of an abusive relationship," Gill said. "Their drug use is related to that."

J.J. Stambaugh may be reached at 865-342-6307.

PROSTITUTION

from A12

Noe has known hookers who have been raped and robbed. He's corralled his share of johns into the back of his patrol car. He's scolded the women who walk the streets. He's tried his best to console angry residents who are sick of finding used condoms in their yards alongside their children's toys.

He concedes, however, that the only effect the police often seem to have is temporarily moving the traffic into other neighborhoods.

"I do my best to push them out of the area," Noe says. "I do what I can do to get them to quit smoking crack."

While KPD periodically busts male prostitutes, they are relatively few and far between, Noe says. All of the regular streetwalkers are women, and many of them have children.

A lot of them aren't locals, Noe adds. Women with drug problems from across East Tennessee flock to Knoxville's streets, sometimes coming into town for only a few hours at a stretch to pay for their habits.

According to Noe, learning to spot hookers in the densely packed residential neighborhoods he patrols calls for a combination of experience, instinct and learning the body language used by prostitutes and johns.

Most of Knoxville's streetwalkers don't wear wigs, thigh-high boots or miniskirts, he explains. They rarely wear bras and prefer clothes that are easy to get out of such as sweatpants and loose-fitting shirts or blouses.

When asked about the youngest hooker he's come across in Knoxville, Noe recalls a 14-year-old girl who had been selling herself in a gas station parking lot.

"She's an adult now," he says. "She's still doing this."

PROSTITUTION-RELATED ARRESTS IN TENNESSEE'S FOUR LARGEST CITIES, 2004 TO 2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
KNOXVILLE					
Prostitution	170	266	290	316	293
Promoting prostitution	2	0	0	3	4
CHATTANOOGA					
Prostitution	6	10	61	56	66
Promoting prostitution	0	0	3	2	6
NASHVILLE					
Prostitution	299	308	217	363	488
Promoting prostitution	13	9	4	2	2
MEMPHIS					
Prostitution	962	1,314	1,417	1,328	1,049
Promoting prostitution	10	29	36	21	21

Source: Tennessee Bureau of Investigation annual crime reports

All ages and professions

When "Kim," a 34-year-old mother of two, is stopped by Noe while trudging along a residential sidewalk just north of Magnolia Avenue, the first thing that comes out of her mouth is: "I don't have a crack pipe."

She shuffles her feet, reluctant to talk until the officer explains she won't be ticketed if she tells him the truth. She turns out her pockets to show that she has no contraband and then denies that she's been turning any tricks.

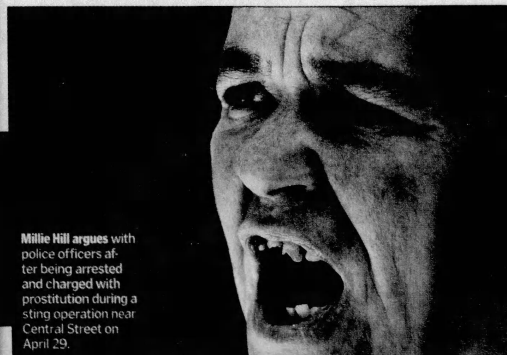
After again promising not to arrest her if she speaks truthfully, the officer asks her what would happen if someone offered \$20 for sex. She replies: "I would be tempted. I probably would do it."

She agrees to be interviewed on the condition her last name not be used and goes on to explain that she's a relative latecomer to the world of hooking for drugs.

"Most of them (customers) are friendly. I've never had a bad situation, actually."

"Kim,"
 a 34-year-old hooker

See PROSTITUTION on A14



Millie Hill argues with police officers after being arrested and charged with prostitution during a sting operation near Central Street on April 29.

PROSTITUTION

from A13

Men, almost all of them white, cruise the neighborhoods around Magnolia Avenue in cars and trucks at all hours of the day and night, hoping to catch the attention of Kim or the dozens of other women who walk the streets, she says.

"They're of all ages and professions. Many are married.

"Most of them are friendly," she says. "I've never had a bad situation, actually."

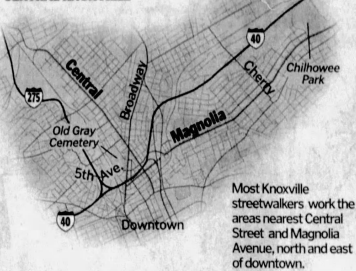
Kim normally charges \$30 for oral sex and \$60 for regular sex, with most of her customers preferring the former. She's never worked for an escort service. She never takes her customers to hotels. Almost all of her work takes place in vehicles.

"Usually, when it's (oral sex) you do it while riding so you don't get caught," she says.

Kim says she didn't develop a serious drug problem until three years ago and has never had an addiction to crack cocaine. She prefers to snort the powder version of the drug, and often manages to stay clean for months at a time before succumbing to yet another binge that puts her back on the streets.

The police have picked her

CENTRAL KNOXVILLE



Most Knoxville streetwalkers work the areas nearest Central Street and Magnolia Avenue, north and east of downtown.

NEWS SENTINEL

up a couple of times for hooking, but her lack of a crack habit has kept her out of jail many times.

Unlike other streetwalkers, she never carries a crack pipe and therefore isn't subject to being arrested for possessing drug paraphernalia.

Kim says she's managed to hold onto custody of her two children — she lives with them at her mother's house in North Knoxville — and would like to get into a drug rehabilitation program but doesn't have the resources.

"My mom knows what I do. She doesn't like it, but she knows."

Investigator: Prostitution is not a victimless crime

Drug addiction plays a key role in street-level prostitution, but it's a mistake to think the problem can be reduced to it, according to KPD Investigator Gina Pierce, who has played the undercover role of a prostitute numerous times in her 10-year career.

"The women are victims," Pierce says. "Not only are they subject to the disease and abuse — mental, physical, sexual — but they continue to fall into that cycle of victimization. They have deep

problems, they need treatment."

Pierce says she has personally busted more than 100 johns while playing the role of a hooker. "It could be anybody," she says. "Most of them are married, with a small percentage of single, lonely men."

Several years ago prostitutes were telling KPD officers about a man who liked to rape them with toilet plungers, she recalls, but it's often impossible to catch or prosecute men who abuse streetwalkers.

Pierce doesn't believe prostitution is simply a private matter between consenting adults and cites as evidence the societal costs of broken marriages, absentee mothers and the medical expenses that go with treating sexually transmitted diseases.

Police arrest far more streetwalkers than johns, but officials say this isn't because they're more interested in busting hookers than their clients.

According to KPD officials, it's difficult to conduct sting operations targeting customers because there are fewer female police officers capable of playing a believable prostitute than there are male officers who can pose as credible johns.

Addiction's pull

Even in broad daylight, it doesn't take long to find a prosti-

tute near Magnolia or Central, but very few of them are willing to talk to reporters.

They're not, they say, embarrassed or afraid their families might learn what they're doing. They just don't want to pay the bloody price of being labeled a snitch.

One of the few exceptions is Jennifer, who steers the conversation toward the pains of addiction and rails against those who think it's all that matter of wanting to stay clean.

"You're fiending, and people, they think if you don't want to do something you just have the willpower not to do it," she says. "But addiction ain't that."

Jennifer says she desperately wants to get into a good drug rehab program but has no health insurance.

Her little girl normally stays with relatives, she explains, and her frequent trips to jail have been painful for them both. "I don't like saying goodbye to her," she says. "I would stop if I could stop."

When asked how many other prostitutes she personally knows, Jennifer rattles off more than 20 street names including "Star," "White Star" and "Alexis."

"I don't know," she says, finally. "There's a lot."

J.J. Stambaugh may be reached at 865-342-6307.

POLICE

from A1

Many are arrested numerous times, driving up the number of changes filed to more than 1,700.

KPD Lt. Dusty Lane and Officer Scott Noe, both of whom work regularly in East Knoxville, said there seemed to be a noticeable increase in streetwalkers around 2005 and 2006. They blamed a wave of crack cocaine addiction that in turn led to an increase in complaints filed by citizens, all of which translated into more busts.

KPD Capt. Gary Holliday, however, doubts the number of prostitutes actually changed much over the years.

"I've been here 19 years, and I

have not seen a huge decrease and I have not seen a huge increase," Holliday said. "It fluctuates, but it's consistent. The girls have changed for the most part, although there are a few girls on the street who were out there 15 years ago.

"Will we ever be able to stop it? No, we'll never stop it, but we sure can enforce the laws."

Since 2004, the Knox County Sheriff's Office has filed 40 prostitution-related charges. Unlike KPD, which is tasked with patrolling Knoxville's inner city neighborhoods, the Sheriff's Office jurisdiction consists primarily of rural and suburban areas that don't attract streetwalkers.

Most of the Sheriff's Office arrests in recent years have been women selling themselves at truck stops off Interstates 40 and 75,

women who are often referred to by the slang term "lot lizards," according to Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Martha Dooley.

"When the officers get a complaint, they'll conduct a sting," Dooley said.

According to Holliday, the high arrest rates within the city limits stem from Chief Sterling P. Owen IV's decision to make busting prostitutes a top priority because of frequent complaints from business owners and residents.

Holliday also said that Knoxville might place a higher priority on prostitution than do other Tennessee cities. Perhaps Knoxville uses different strategies that drive up arrests, he said.

"We try to do something at least once a week, whether it's a reverse sting where we try to approach

men with an undercover female officer or undercover males try to approach females, or escort services or Craigslist stings," he said.

Metropolitan Nashville Police Department spokesman Don Aaron, however, said his agency is relentless in its pursuit of prostitution in all its forms, whether it be streetwalkers or independent escorts advertising on Web sites like Craigslist.

Nashville police began aggressively cracking down on prostitution in 2002 through the use of frequent undercover stings and by padlocking adult businesses as public nuisances, Aaron said. Also, the department posts color photographs of men arrested for trying to buy sex on its Web site as a deterrent.

"It's well-known among those

who would take part in (escort) services that the Police Department is on the Internet and watching," Aaron said. "Each of our six precincts has groups of undercover detectives working prostitution, drug activity, etc. Any of those six units may decide to do a prostitution sting any given day."

Memphis Police Department officials didn't respond to requests for comment.

Chattanooga spokeswoman Sgt. Jerri Weary said her city doesn't have a serious problem with prostitution.

"Real prostitution — of the form you may see in Las Vegas — we don't have it," Weary said. "Most of ours are those who are homeless, working on the street supporting their drug habit. ... But pros, we don't have any here."

Come See Our New Home (Page).

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