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Grand Chute targets prostitution

Town official: 'It's an ongoing problem'

By **Jessie Van Berkel**
For The Post-Crescent

GRAND CHUTE — One of the women arrested for prostitution was a homeless teen who traveled here from Wausau. A few others came

from Florida and Texas. But the majority of prostitutes arrested in this community of 21,300 take the U.S. 41 corridor up from Milwaukee.

Grand Chute has become a preferred place to sell sex,

police and town officials acknowledge. A major highway cuts through the town, which is dotted with 20 hotels and motels. The women involved in prostitution tell officers they're safer working in the Fox Cities and can

make more money here. Grand Chute police sensed several years ago that there was a problem. After officers arrested a woman who spoke no English and was living out of a suitcase in an apartment filled with cash, condoms and minimal furniture in

HOW MANY ARRESTS?

Arrests in Grand Chute since April 2011:
» **Patronizing prostitutes** (\$2,667.50 fine): 109
» **Prostitution citation or violating the escort license requirement** (\$2,667.50 fine): 76
» **Felony keeping a place of prostitution** (up to a \$10,000 fine and six years in prison): 13
» **Misdemeanor prostitution** (up to a \$10,000 fine and nine months in prison): 22

Source: Municipal citation records, Wisconsin circuit court records

See **ARRESTS**, Page A11



Rocco Frievalt, president of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh College Republicans, hands out campaign pamphlets on Tuesday to the students on the campus. Turnout among young voters could affect the outcome of November's presidential election. SHU-LING ZHOU/GANNETT WISCONSIN MEDIA

Young volunteers' efforts often big campaign boost

YOUTH VOTE COULD SHIFT ELECTION

GANNETT

Wisconsin Media
INVESTIGATIVE TEAM
ENTERPRISE REPORT

By **Kathleen Foody**
Gannett Wisconsin Media
Investigative Team

As dozens of people rushed through the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus Thursday morning, 19-year-old Kyra Trybus

tuned out the volunteers shouting "Register to vote!" just steps away.

Trybus said she's not planning to register or cast a ballot in the November presidential election because she simply doesn't feel informed enough.

"Politics aren't something I pay attention to," Trybus said, glancing at the line of people streaming toward Thursday's campaign event for President Barack Obama. "I don't feel like I know enough to vote."

Trybus is among the 37 percent of young voters who don't plan to vote this year, up from 28 percent at this point before the 2008 election, according to a September study from the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan civic engagement group.

The shift is potentially damaging to Obama, who won the support of 66 per-

See **YOUTH**, Page A4



WISCONSIN'S YOUNG VOTERS

The number of Wisconsin registered voters age 18 to 24 often fluctuates:

October 2008: 340,815
October 2010: 284,139
December 2010: 327,507
July 2011: 273,918
February 2012: 226,746
August 2012: 301,071

Source: Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

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Today's Best Bets ■ more at www.postcrescent.com

FRESH SOUNDS:

Lawrence University New Music concert series opens at Harper Hall, Appleton, featuring Grammy-nominated soprano Lucy Shelton. **8 p.m.**

CHAPEL CONCERT:

Lawrence University Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band Concert performs at Memorial Chapel, Appleton. Free. **3 p.m.**

MUSIC SHOW:

Ingrid Michaelson in concert at the Meyer Theatre, Green Bay, with opening act Sugar and the Hi Lows. **\$25. 7:30 p.m.**


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Arrests

Continued from Page A1

February 2010, the department decided to find out just how big the problem was.

"It was greater than anyone ever suspected," Town Board Chairman David Schowalter said. "It's an ongoing problem on a daily basis."

Since April 2011, Grand Chute police have arrested 74 women and one man for prostitution, along with 107 men for soliciting prostitutes.

The bulk of the arrests came from six large-scale stings involving up to eight officers who spent roughly two 12-hour days pretending to be prostitutes and johns. Grand Chute has devoted about 1,150 man-hours and more than \$21,000 in overtime and extra staffing for the stings.

So far, police haven't gotten tangible results, sometimes they just people who say they heard the town is cracking down on the crime, but nonetheless, arrest numbers remain high.

"I don't know if we'll ever get rid of the problem completely. I don't know if anyone will ever do that. But to significantly reduce it would be great," Detective Scott Callaway said.

Is the effort worth it?

Some criminal justice researchers and law enforcement officials question whether prostitution stings alone are effective.

In Appleton, which has half as many hotels as Grand Chute, police conduct about one sting every month, during which three or four officers work for a few hours, Appleton police Lt. Steve Elliott said.

In 2010, police did 10 sting operations and arrested 15 prostitutes, according to the department's annual report for that year. They made 25 prostitution-related arrests in 2011, Elliott said.

The stings are important because they show criminals that police are watching, but more needs to be done to educate the Fox Valley community about prostitution, Elliott said.

Appleton held its first "john school" in September. It is a daylong educational session for men who solicited a prostitute. One of the resources the department used to set up the school is an investigation by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, which decries stings targeting prostitutes.

The investigation blames arresting and charging prostitutes is ineffective because they turn into repeat offenders. Women often can't pay the fine charged against them — in Grand Chute and Appleton, that's \$2,667.50 — and are forced to return to prosti-

GRAND CHUTE PROSTITUTION PROFILED

Prostitutes

- Youngest prostitute: 18 years old
- Oldest prostitute: 50 years old
- Where from: Of the 75 people, 49 were from Milwaukee — the other cities with more than one person were Green Bay, which had six people, and Appleton and Menasha, which each had three people.
- How many arrested more than once since April 2011: 13
- Johns
- Youngest john: 19 years old
- Oldest john: 70 years old
- Where from: The Johns came from 38 cities. Appleton had the highest number of Johns with 27 of the men. Only one of the men was from Grand Chute.
- How many arrested more than once since April 2011: Two

Source: Municipal citation records

tution, the study states. In addition, the arrests don't combat the underlying reason prostitution exists: the demand for commercial sex.

The school taught Johns about the community impact of prostitution, dynamics of pimping, effect on prostitutes, health and legal consequences, and sex addiction, Elliott said.

"There's a lot of people that think, wink, wink and a nod, that this is the world's oldest profession and it's victimless," Elliott said. "It's not."

Regina Labby was one of the speakers at the school. Labby works with 5-stones, a nonprofit agency that fights sex trafficking in Wisconsin. She wants the men to empathize with the prostitutes, who she said are often under the abusive control of a pimp.

"We heard so many men say well, she wanted it, she's there freely. This is the lifestyle she chose. ... Well, the reality is that if she doesn't say that, she's going to be hurt either physically or emotionally," Labby said. "This isn't like this dream fantasy world coming true; it's a real issue."

There should be more resources for women who are picked up for prostitution and harsher sentences for the Johns, she said.

In April, University of Chicago law and philosophy professor Martha Nussbaum wrote an opinion piece for the New York Times, saying legalizing prostitution could improve the situation for women.

"Keeping prostitution illegal only increases the threats of violence and sickness and abuse that women face because illegality prevents adequate supervision, encourages the control of pimps and discourages health checks," she wrote.

Elliott disagreed, citing an article by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women that outlines 10 reasons not to legalize prostitution. The article argues legalization would be "a gift to pimps, traffickers and the sex industry" and would increase prostitution and offer little real protection to the women in the trade.

It also spreads sexually transmitted diseases,

Elliott said.

If law enforcement allowed prostitution to continue unabated it would foster other crime, like human trafficking and drug distribution, and would hurt hotels' business, Schowalter said.

"What comes out of this if it's not stopped, the consequences, I think, would be far worse. So I think what we're doing is definitely the right thing," Schowalter said.

Police haven't arrested any children who were sex-trafficked — though three of the women were 18 years old. One of the women arrested said she was first prostituted when she was 14. The arrest of the non-English-speaking woman in February 2010 also seemed to be a human-trafficking situation, Callaway said.

On Sept. 13, Parish Saxton, a 20-year-old Milwaukee woman, was at the Outagamie County courthouse for a preliminary hearing. She was charged in August with prostitution and keeping a place of prostitution in Grand Chute. After walking out of the hearing, Milwaukee police took her behind the glass doors of the Outagamie County Sheriff's office and handcuffed her. She was arrested on charges of human trafficking children in Milwaukee.

"Some people look at it as prostitution with two people having sex and who cares? This shows that ... it goes beyond the simple prostitution stuff," Callaway said.

More than an escort

Every day, Callaway checks the "Appleton escorts" section of backpage.com. And every day, there's a list of women he knows are not coming to his community to join a man for dinner.

Backpage.com is the main source police use in conducting stings, though the department also uses Entertainer, a Green Bay and Fox Cities publication that lists events in the area along with ads for women.

The Post-Crescent sent an email to backpage.com through its general "contact us" page asking for comment on this story, but did not receive a reply. The website does not provide a number to call.

An email also was sent

to the vice president of sales of Village Voice Media, the former parent company of backpage.com, but the email account was no longer in use. Last month, backpage.com became an independent company as other publications under Village Voice Media were swept into a new holding company, Voice Media Group.

The P-C contacted the owner of Entertainer, but the telephone line was disconnected while a reporter explained the reason for the call. The reporter dialed the number again and left a message, but the call was not returned.

Backpage.com has recently taken heat for being a valuable asset for sex traffickers, and law enforcement agencies nationwide use it as a tool to combat prostitution.

Before Grand Chute police started using the website and publication to arrest people for prostitution, they asked the board to establish an escort service ordinance like the one Appleton passed in 2003. The ordinance requires anyone who's working as an escort to register with the town.

Since the ordinance passed in December 2010, no one has registered for a license, Grand Chute Police Chief Greg Peterson said. That means every woman they arrest is at least cited for an escort license violation, a \$2,667.50 fine.

Detectives are starting to go beyond the slap-on-the-wrist ticket and look for signs the woman was keeping a place of prostitution — meaning they saw many customers — which is a felony charge, Callaway said.

"I think that will make a difference because when some of these girls just get a ticket, or whatever, and they're free to go, I don't know how much it does sometimes. And these felony arrests will make a bigger impact," he said.

Since July, 11 women have been charged with a felony for keeping a place of prostitution. There weren't any felony charges before then. There also have been 22 misdemeanor charges of prostitution since April 2011.

Although the stings are taxing on the small department, they are an effective use of police resources, Schowalter said. When police proposed establishing the escort ordinance, it was met with a round of "ayes," he said.

"I didn't realize anything of that magnitude was going on in our town," Schowalter said. "When I found out, and the board found out, we took it very seriously, because who wants to be known as the town that has this issue?"

That reputation also could hurt the town's hotels and deter family business, Days Inn General

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