**You’ve got mail**

***Unusual letter campaign may curb prostitution***

**Staff Writer**

Telegram & Gazette

Published: January 14, 2006

<https://www.telegram.com/story/news/local/north/2006/01/15/you-ve-got-mail/53139612007/>

Worcester police have added an interesting and controversial new weapon to their fight against prostitution in the city: A three-pronged plan that will look at the root causes of the so-called victimless crime and, in time, deter the customers, many of whom surface again and again during arrests.

Under the new program, police will mail a “Dear John” letter to everyone arrested for soliciting a prostitute, warning the defendant of the crime’s gravity and the real possibility of contracting AIDS, hepatitis and sexually transmitted diseases they could spread to their families and loved ones.

The owner of the car used in the crime also will be informed by letter that it has been towed and tagged as part of a police inventory and will be released for a fee.

The rationale: Many of those arrested are not from the area and will attend court and face their charges without family members or friends knowing about it.

The third part of the program, an anti-prostitution course for johns, may work in some cases, although its effect as a deterrent has yet to be demonstrated.

That said, the effort to curb the sex trade is most welcome. Far from a victimless crime, prostitution is one of the few in which the perpetrator is also the victim.

Prostitution and its attendant ills destroy lives and drag down neighborhoods. No one is suggesting that the proverbial world’s oldest profession and its evils will be eradicated, but continued pressure will curb it — and the city will be better for it.