**Prostitution sting nets 13 arrests**

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CHILLICOTHE - Chillicothe police have long known there is a prostitution problem in the city but got a better look at the magnitude and scope of it in the last week.

What they found not only shocked them, but also surprised out-of-town officers who see it more regularly than local officers do.

Police Chief Keith Washburn said their Dayton police partners were "shocked" by the level of prostitution in Chillicothe. Police averaged an arrest an hour over the two-day operation, ultimately charging 11 men and two women.

"There were a lot more people that were biting than we thought would," Washburn said.

At times several cars were circling the same woman and officers took note of their license plates.

"We're going to send them a friendly letter that the activity they are conducting is illegal," Washburn said.

The local prostitution problem has been placed on a national stage due to interest in the [six women who disappeared or died from Chillicothe between May 2014 and May 2015](https://www.chillicothegazette.com/story/news/local/2015/06/25/chillicothe-ohio-missing-women-flier/29291751/). Police have said the primary link between the cases have been a history of drug abuse and prostitution - issues that often go hand-in-hand.

Washburn has long talked about plans to target local prostitution and focus efforts on the "johns" — those paying for sex. Solicitation arrests primarily are done through sting operations with an undercover officer to get evidence of the transaction on tape.

In an effort to put together a more efficient operation, Washburn partnered with Dayton Police Department to get a handful of Chillicothe officers trained. Dayton police assisted with this week's operation, but the goal will be to be able to do them without that technical assistance, Washburn said.

"There will be more of this in the future because this has to stop," Washburn said, adding they will target other areas as complaints rise.

The operation was conducted over 12 hours on Wednesday and Thursday with assistance from the Dayton Police Department Narcotics Bureau Street Crime Unit, Ohio Highway Patrol, and Ross County Sheriff’s Office. Washburn said efforts targeted known areas of prostitution based on surveillance and community complaints including the intersection of Bridge and Second streets.

The sting was part of the department's efforts to combat not only human trafficking, but the drug trade. According to Washburn, every dollar spent on prostitution feeds the drug trade in the area.

But how effective will the arrests be considering the charges are third-degree misdemeanors which carry no more than 60 days in jail and up to a $500 fine? Washburn, like other police, hopes media exposure of operations help deter those convicted of soliciting sex from doing so again and maybe scare off others who weren't caught.

Some larger cities where highly visible prostitution has been an issue longer than in rural areas have added on additional consequences through local ordinances. For example, a first-time soliciting offender in Cincinnati can expect a $1,000 fine, have their car impounded, and required to go to "john school" — a one-day class that costs the offender $500.

Washburn is hopeful local judges will sentence those convicted of soliciting to take part in a john school so the offenders can learn the scope of impact on the drug problem, those prostituting, and families — both the offender and those prostituting.

"Educating these guys, the John school, is probably the best thing," Washburn said of punishment.

Those arrested on charges of loitering to engage in solicitation and soliciting were:

Robert Bost, 81, of 884 Ohio 207.

Oscar Conley, 48, of 64 Allen Ave.

Joseph Coon, 42, of 423 Bethel Road.

Dustin Everhart, 31, of 244 Caldwell St.

Ryan Fair, 33, of 145 Fuller Road.

Carl Hayth, 64, of 4708 Stoney Creek Road.

Kanwaljeet Lall, 42, of 864 Jessica St., Turlock, Calif.

Leo Madden, 80, of 941 Cleveland Ave.

Thomas Strausbaugh, 74, of 1331 Possum Hollow Road.

Timothy Theobald, 51, of 17273 Ohio 104.

Joshua Wiseman, 41, of 581 Parsons Ave.

Rosie Darling, 39, of 676 Fourth St.

Angela Seward, 42, of 1214 Nelson Drive. She also was charged with possession of criminal tools and possession of drug abuse instruments.