

Economic Impact...

Continued from front page

and 500 such men prowling the streets on any given day. In recent years, local news has shocked us by showcasing several prominent figures caught in embarrassing sting operations. Obviously, the cost to the families embroiled in these scandals is huge, but beyond that is the economic damage to our community

Prostitution is a seedy business driven by the laws of supply and demand. Not only does the City of Jacksonville expend enormous resources for law enforcement, health care and the cost of prosecuting and housing violators, but the hidden, residual impact on the economy for these brief sexual encounters is staggering. These often unperceived costs involve loss of property value, loss of potential development, loss of revenue and ultimately loss of tax dollars. Millions have been spent revitalizing areas that accommodate prostitutes and the insidious drug trade that goes hand-in-hand with the world's oldest profession.

City Council concerned

Nine dedicated police officers make up the JSO Vice Squad Unit. Beat patrolmen when necessary assist them.

Detectives in undercover sting operations target escort services and street prostitutes, adult entertainment clubs, city parks and public restrooms. The cost associated with these operations is considerable.

Councilwoman Sharon Copeland says that what concerns the Council most is the recidivism rate. "In 2002 alone, 597 suspects were arrested 763 times for prostitution in Jacksonville. Of the 597 arrested, 20 percent were re-arrested multiple times for prostitution and related offenses. This all costs a great deal of money."

According to Gordon Bass, Director of the Department of Corrections, the estimated cost of arresting and processing a suspect for any crime in Duval County is \$764 - "a very conservative estimate," Director Bass cautioned. "This figure would only be applicable to a 'perfect arrest.'" A perfect arrest is one in which the suspect goes willingly, is not intoxicated and carries no weapons. "Unfortunately, we get very few of those."

But according to George Lueders, JSO Director of Organized Crime, the cost of not containing these crimes is much higher. He estimates that more

than 90 percent of all prostitutes arrested are drug addicts. Many are infected with HIV / AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). All are likely victims and therefore vehicles for spreading disease. Law enforcement, attempting to contain this vice and the social ills associated with its spread, is continually searching for ways to change the repeat patterns.

Rutherford's plan should help

Lueders is convinced that Sheriff Rutherford's multiple misdemeanor program, which calls for incarceration of repeat offenders for up to one year, will go a long way toward



Sheriff John Rutherford

making a difference in combating prostitution in Duval County and save the tax payer millions of dollars in the long run. "Part of the problem is that offenders are substance abusers. The only way to break the cycle of prostitution is to get the offenders in a meaningful treatment program," said Lueders. To accomplish this

goal, offenders must remain incarcerated until they can become drug free. That takes time, and all of it costs the taxpayer.

Time is just what organizations such as River Region Human Services need in order to perform their dependency treatment, both for pre-trial and sentenced inmates. Services range from substance abuse prevention and intervention services to aftercare case management services. What comes in between is the Secure Drug Treatment Program/Therapeutic Community, a correction facility-based 120-day drug dependency treatment program. River Region contracts annually to perform these services inside the Community Corrections Division (CCD) at 451 Catherine Street.

This program is so successful that it has become a national blueprint for intervention, according to Michael W. Bennett, Corrections Services Director for River Region. The annual budget is just over \$1.2 million. While costly, both Lueders and Bass agree it is the only shot at breaking the cycle of prostitution. Again, a high price the community pays

for the casual sexual encounter of apathetic johns.

AIDS/HIV is a costly, growing problem

Another considerable cost these sexual predators should be concerned with is the growing HIV and AIDS epidemic in Jacksonville. Though once largely isolated to the gay male community (comprising 80 percent of those infected as late as 1989), the virus has shifted to the heterosexual community - today reflecting a 50-50 split. Of the total number of people infected, 70 percent are now African American and there is a significant shifting to "poor communities of color," according to David Andress, STD Program Administrator of the Duval County Health Department.

The cost for treatment is rising. Currently, Jacksonville spends an estimated \$6,000,000 in public support to treat the uninsured and indigent persons infected with the virus. Most of the funding comes from our federal and state coffers, and the estimated total lifetime cost for treating just one person with the infection is \$175,000. "While the

'Johns', page 12

Unsolved Murder



Name: William "Bill" Klinedinst

Info: This 61-year-old loving husband and father was murdered July 4, 1992, on I-295 by a rock thrown through the windshield of his car.

Reward: \$90,430

Notify: JSO at 630-0500 or 630-2172

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke,
18th-century Scottish philosopher
and British parliamentarian



Do Something,
..... Please

THE AUCHTER COMPANY

GENERAL CONTRACTORS • DESIGN BUILD • CONSTRUCTION MANAGERS
4804 KERNAN BLVD SOUTH, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA • 904.355.3536 • CGC 000493

**OUR EMPLOYEES ARE THE
BEST IN THE BUSINESS
FOR 40 YEARS**



**W.W. GAY MECHANICAL
CONTRACTOR, INC.**

388-2696