

'Johns'...

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bulk of this is paid in private insurance, eventually the person becomes unable to work and then Medicaid and ultimately Medicare must kick in," said Andress. Clearly, in the field of prostitution, private insurance is nonexistent, shifting the entire burden to the taxpayer.

Prevention and education are the obvious keys to combating the spread of the virus, but in the realm of prostitution, AIDS takes on additional problems. Prostitutes who work the streets are obviously distrustful of government and law enforcement. They tend to retreat from people or organizations reaching out to them and forego medical treatment until they become too sick to work.

Andress said his team attempts to overcome this obstacle with special mobile testing units that go into hotspots in the communities, targeting prostitutes and known drug users. Funding for this program locally is a \$60,000 federal grant. Approximately 780 people were tested and treated on the streets of Jacksonville by this unit in the past four months. The Health Department uses the same tests to evaluate jail inmates for HIV.

The State requires, under Chapter 796, a mandatory HIV test for all persons convicted of prostitution, as well as counseling before and after the test. Convicted Johns have no such requirement. According to Andress, a rapid test, ORAQUICK, is used and produces results in 20 minutes at a cost of \$10.23. The cost in terms of staff time for intervention and counseling ranges from \$20 to \$30 per case, much more if the person is found to be infected. The process of tracking down former sexual partners can be very expensive and even impossible in the prostitution community.

Prosecution is less expensive

Interestingly, one of the least expensive costs associated with this entire legal process is prosecution. Assistant State Attorney John Guy says most offenders – both prostitutes and Johns – plead out at their first appearance, saving the State considerable expense. The practice of pleading out, unfortunately, often perpetuates the vicious cycle by putting offenders right back on the streets before they can be helped by a drug treatment program, while at the same time creating little if any hardship on the morals violators.

According to Councilwoman Suzanne Jenkins, the slap on the

wrist the Johns receive from the State's Attorney and Duval County judges is an outrage and the root cause of perpetuating the cycle. Jenkins has become the most outspoken member of the City Council on this matter and helped to spearhead the Philips Highway corridor cleanup.

"The problem is that the statutes favor the Johns. Our community can no longer afford to turn a blind eye," Jenkins emphatically states. "The costs are too high. Duval County

merchants simply move to another area. Their well-heeled clientele follow. Usually the new "home" is a neighborhood in need of repair that instead gets another thrust into a downward spiral. Property values go down or cease to accelerate, and the spiral gains momentum, costing local businesses their customers and giving way to urban blight.

The apparent exception to economic devastation is the adult entertainment industry, which, while exercising First Amendment rights, prospers

the South Metro Park Business District and the surrounding neighborhood associations, have accomplished miracles - with no taxpayer funding - chasing prostitutes and drug dealers from their midst. (See story in May issue: Philips Highway Citizens Take Back Community)

Drugs are the root of the problem

Drugs, according to every expert interviewed, are at the root of this sordid, expensive malevolence that plagues our

More shocking and disturbing is the role the Johns play in this plague on Jacksonville. If prostitution is a commodity to be bartered, bought and sold, then the John is the end-use consumer, driving the demand for illicit sex ever higher with no apparent regard for his family, community or his own self-respect. When one considers the socio-economic backgrounds from which these men largely hail, it is mind-boggling. By all accounts, a mere 300 to 500 men, some of them considered community leaders in the light of day, cost this city an exorbitant amount of money and require innumerable law enforcement man-hours each year in their illicit pursuit of sex. Considering that virtually all of the prostitutes are drug addicted and pursue this line of work to feed their habit, these men also contribute to a significant percentage of drug trade dollars.

Through their purchases of sexual favors, these affluent few not only facilitate increased levels of disease and incarceration costs, contribute to urban blight and tear down the very economy which many of them seek to build up in their public lives, but they provide financial support to the drug trade in Jacksonville as surely as if they pushed the rocks of crack cocaine themselves.

Florida HIV/AIDS Statistics as of 3/2/04

Source: Florida Dept. of Health

	Total Florida Cases	Area 4* Cases	Duval County Cases	Area 4 Cases from Heterosexual contact	Area 4 Total Male Cases	Area 4 Total Female Cases
HIV	32,113	1,797	1,624	812	1,061	736
AIDS	95,141	5,435	4,834	1,302	4,040	1,395

*Area 4 includes Duval, St. Johns, Clay, Nassau and Baker Counties

judges must stop treating this with a wink and a nod, a 'boys will be boys' attitude. The taxpayers should be outraged." She is working with Director Bass and others putting together a comprehensive plan to fully address the problem.

Prostitution creates economic loss

But expenditure to the taxpayer does not stop at the courthouse steps or at the JSO. Prostitution continues to take its toll on the private sector in terms of vanishing property tax dollars and loss of economic opportunity. Add in the cost of urban renewal associated with areas where prostitutes and drug dealers ply their trade, and the costs become astronomical.

LaVilla was brought back from squalor for the bargain price of \$30,000,000 as part of Mayor Ed Austin's 1993 urban renewal project – the \$238 million River City Renaissance Program. What is now a fine example for the community, boasting an award-winning school of the arts, law firms, the Ritz Theater and a credit union, once was home only to Sally Industries and a glut of real estate leasing for as little as \$2 a square foot. Our controversial new courthouse, soon to anchor an area once known for prostitution, drugs and decay, will bring even more law firms and other businesses to the area – a big boost for tax base. But first the real estate had to be cleaned up, the crack houses torn down and the prostitutes run off – all at taxpayers' expense.

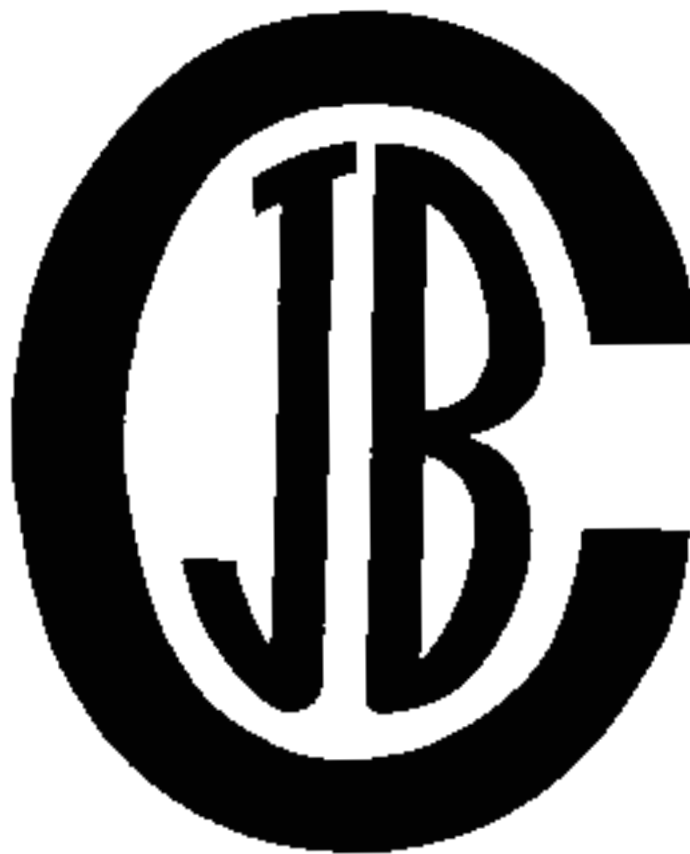
Unfortunately, the cycle of prostitution is hard to break. According to the Sheriff's Office, when one area is cleaned up, streetwalkers and drug

under these conditions at the expense of the neighborhood. The city must continually battle these decaying areas and often attempt a taxpayer rescue, pumping in millions of dollars for improvement while recruiting new investment from the private sector. Areas such as Springfield have benefited from intervention but much remains to be done. Other areas, such as

city. Prostitutes comprise a large percentage of the drug dealer's trade and are the reason virtually all of these women and men cannot break their destructive cycle. Money will continue to pour into drug prevention and recovery programs throughout the city and surrounding areas, but drug dealers are not the only guilty parties.

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in helping to make Jacksonville a safer place to live, work, and grow.



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