SENATE JUDICIARY
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Cases Montana Prostitution Kalispell 13 year old mother meth

Notebook: Trafficking
Created: 1/16/2013 7:55 AM **Updated:** 1/16/2013 7:56 AM

By ERIC SCHWARTZ/Daily Inter Lake *updated: Aug 31, 2011*

A 43-year-old Kalispell woman could face up to life in prison after allegedly forcing a 13-year-old girl into prostitution to support the woman's drug habit.

Jennifer Ellen Johnson was arrested Saturday and has been charged by the Flathead County Attorney's Office with felony aggravated promotion of prostitution.

According to court documents, she allowed Daniel Parmer Smith to have sex with the girl on multiple occasions in exchange for drugs.

Deputy County Attorney Lori Adams wrote in charging documents that "the deal was that Daniel Smith would bring drugs to the defendant and the defendant sends [the girl] with Daniel Smith to have sex with him."

Smith, 32, was arrested Friday and has been charged with sexual intercourse without consent, sexual assault and accountability to sexual intercourse without consent. Each of the felony charges are punishable by up to life in prison.

The last time Smith is alleged to have had sexual contact with the girl is May 18. The crimes first were reported May 20 when the girl was taken to Kalispell Regional Medical Center by her baby sitter.

The baby sitter told a Kalispell Police Department officer that the girl had told her she had been having sex with Smith, according to court documents. The girl later told a Kalispell detective on May 24 that Johnson has a drug and alcohol problem, which is seen as a motive for the alleged crime.

On Aug. 25, the girl said during another interview that she would see Smith one or two times a week and that he would bring drugs to Johnson.

She said Johnson would send her with Smith to his trailer in Columbia Falls where they would have sex, according to court documents. She said Smith also would allow his 19-year-old friend to have sex with her.

Some of the activity also took place at Johnson's apartment, according to court documents. The 19-year-old friend has not been charged.

Johnson and Smith both are scheduled to be arraigned Sept. 15 in Flathead District Court.

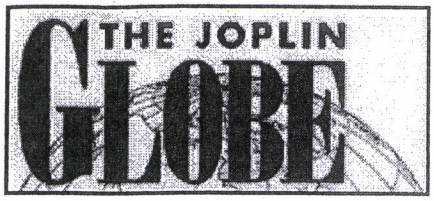
They both are being held in the county jail. Smith's bail has been set at $105,000 while Johnson's is set at $102,000.

In addition to the charge of promoting prostitution, Johnson has also been charged with issuing a bad check, a felony common scheme.

Aggravated promotion of prostitution is punishable by no less than two years and up to life in

prison.

Reporter Eric Schwartz may be reached at 758-4441 or by email ateschwartz@dailyinterlake.com.



January 9, 2013

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Online prostitution stings in Joplin turning up runaways (http://www.joplinglobe.com/topstories/x1303513976/Onli -prostitution-stings-in-Joplin-turning-up-runaways)

By Jeff Lehr
Globe Staff Writer (http://www.joplinglobe.com)

JOPLIN, Mo. — She knocked on the door of the room at the Holiday Inn on Range Line Road.

The police officers let her in. She was the girl they were expecting, the 14-year-old runaway Springfield police had asked local authorities to help locate.

The girl with the adult-services ad on Backpage.com. The girl with a posted rate of $230 an hour.

As she was being detained, she let slip that her pimp and his girlfriend were waiting for her in a car in the parking lot. The officers checked it out and wound up arresting Louis G. Venning, 32, and Kourtnie M. Eldridge, 22, both of Billings, Mont., on felony charges of promoting prostitution.

Joplin police consider the detention of the girl and the arrest of the couple Nov. 20 as an example of the type of criminal activities they hope to curtail through the Internet prostitution stings they have been conducting since April of last year.

For the most part, the stings have been producing misdemeanor arrests or citations for prostitution, according to police Sgt. Chad Allison. But they can lead to felony cases as well, he said.

Allison said the girl's detention and the arrest of her alleged pimp and his girlfriend were a sort of "emergency sting" prompted by the request from Springfield police. The girl had run away from her grandparents and was known to be prostituting herself in Joplin, he said. Detectives in Joplin simply looked up her ad and sought a "date" at the hotel.

The girl was turned over to juvenile authorities in Greene County, Allison said. Venning and

Eldridge are being prosecuted in Newton County Circuit Court, with their prelimi hearings set for Feb. 19.

Allison said this reportedly was not the first time the girl ran away and engaged i prostitution. She grew up in another state and lacked a stable home life, he said

She told police that she hooked up with Venning and Eldridge only recently. Venning had sent her a message at her Backpage.com listing and offered her an opportunity to travel with them, she told police. A probable-cause affidavit alleges that they scheduled her dates and took the money she received.

"When we arrested her, she didn't have any money on her, but Venning had $4,650," Allison said.

Police found brochures in the couple's car that suggested they may have been planning to move on to Arkansas from Joplin. Allison said investigators believe Venning moves from city to city and may have had other women working for him.

The vast majority of those charged in the stings in Joplin have been adults who were advertising on Backpage.com. But the girl who showed up at the motel in November was not the first juvenile officers encountered via those ads. In late May, one of the females who responded in dates made by investigators also proved to be a juvenile runaway from another state.

Allison believes the sting operations are having some impact on the posting of ads for the Joplin area on Backpage.com. For instance, he said, police arrested two women and cited four others in the most recent operation in December.

"Out of those six, only one have I seen posting an ad since then," he said.

Federal interest

SGT. CHAD ALLISON of the Joplin Police Department said federal authorities are aware of a case involving a 14-year-old runaway who was detained for prostitution in November and may eventually take over prosecution of the matter. But investigators have yet to find any evidence that her alleged pimp took her across state lines for the purpose of prostitution, he said.

Missing Evergreen girl found safe near Las Vegas

By JESSE DAVIS/Daily Inter Lake | Posted: Tuesday, February 14, 2012 12:58 pm

A 12-year-old Evergreen girl reported missing Tuesday morning was found safe just 12 hours later south of Las Vegas in the company of two men, one of whom she met on the Internet.

"The FBI are the ones that came up with her for us," Flathead County Sheriff Chuck Curry said Tuesday night. "We've been working with them all day."

Jasmine Walker apparently left her home sometime Monday night or early Tuesday morning with Edgard "Eddie" Le, a 27-year-old man from Escondido, Calif. Jasmine and Le had established a connection through Facebook and phone calls.

Jasmine is a sixth-grade student at Somers Middle School.

Her disappearance prompted an Amber Alert to be issued, since it was believed Jasmine and Le were heading to California in Le's 1996 Honda Accord.

She was found by federal agents in a vehicle along with Le and another man shortly after 6 p.m. Tuesday. Curry said he believes they were found near the border of Nevada and California.

Both men are in custody, but no details were available yet on the second man. They could face local charges of custodial interference or kidnapping, depending on the details of the case and the decision by the Flathead County Attorney's Office. The U.S. Department of Justice also could file charges against the men.

Jasmine's mother, April Hindahl, and her friends and family endured a tense day wondering where her daughter was.

She said when she learned Jasmine had been located, her first thoughts were: "Oh my god, they found her, she's safe. Can I go pick her up?"

Jasmine can't come home just yet since the FBI still is working on the case, but as of 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, her father already had booked a flight to Las Vegas for today.

Hindahl said Le is being held on a $250,000 bond and a warrant is being put together for the other man.

"I have to give so many thanks to the Amber Alert system and the sheriff's department here for acting so fast on this," Hindahl said. "Also the FBI, the Las Vegas Police Department and the Escondido Police Department, which worked with us also. Just a big huge thanks to everybody that helped with searching for her."

The drama began to unfold when Hindahl went into Jasmine's room Tuesday morning to wake her up for school and found her bed was empty. She reported her missing at approximately 6:30 a.m.

Hindahl said she discovered her daughter's connection with Le when Jasmine's stepmother, Marie

Walker, went to the Facebook account of one of her friends and discovered Jasmine had listed her age as 17 instead of 12 to get around the rule that no one under 13 is supposed to use the social network.

Walker found Facebook conversations between Jasmine and Le.

Walker's husband — Jasmine's father — tracked his phone records back to January and found the two have been talking on the phone since then.

When Jasmine turned up missing Tuesday morning, Hindahl found out her daughter had sneaked into her room while she was sleeping and taken her cell phone, calling Le twice during the night.

Curry said the Sheriff's Office has handled similar cases before, although he couldn't remember any with similar ages.

"In this case, probably, based upon the ages, this may be getting a little more attention and a little more work," Curry said. "If a 16-year-old ran away with a 17-year-old it would probably get a different response. Certainly we investigate everything as appropriate."

Curry said social media have changed the landscape of child protection.

"Ten or 15 years ago or 20 years ago, you had to worry about predators preying upon your children from within your town or neighborhood," he said. "Now you have to worry about them preying from a national or international level."

Hindahl did not mince words in her opinion:

"Facebook is a predator's playground."

Curry urged parents to be more involved in their children's lives, particularly their use of social media.

"Your children should have no right to privacy on their social networking sites," he said. "You should have the ability to look at your kids' stuff and you should do that frequently. Unfortunately, kids don't always possess adult judgment, which is why they still live at home. As parents, it's important that we stay on top of monitoring what our kids are doing online."

Hindahl said relatives called her all day Tuesday offering their support. Her mother, Juli, spent the day with her at her Evergreen home. Hindahl's friends also called and posted information about Jasmine online in an effort to help find her.

She described her daughter as a cheery, lovable girl who loves to play basketball. Jasmine loves everything western, Hindahl said, from horses to country music and her Ariat cowboy boots. She especially likes teenage country singer Scotty McCreery, who won the most recent American Idol competition.

Hindahl said Jasmine is mostly a homebody, enjoying playing games on her Nintendo Wii and her tablet computer. She also enjoys playing outside with her two golden Labradors, Slate and Stone.

"She's very happy and just wants to be friends with everybody," Hindahl said. "She's a loving, friendly, wonderful little girl."

Reporter Jesse Davis may be reached at 758-4441 or by email at jdavis@dailyinterlake.com.

Cases Man pleads guilty to kidnap of local girl

Notebook:	Trafficking		
Created:	2/15/2013 1:29 PM	Updated:	2/15/2013 1:29 PM
URL:	http://www.dailyinterlake.com/news/local_montana/article_56360bea-770e-11e2-a45...		

Man pleads guilty to kidnap of local girl

By JESSE DAVIS/The Daily Inter Lake | Posted: Thursday, February 14, 2013 10:00 pm

One year to the day after transporting a runaway Evergreen girl to California, a 29-year-old Escondido, Calif., man pleaded guilty to federal charges stemming from the incident.

Edgard "Eddie" Le pleaded guilty Thursday during U.S. District Court proceedings in Missoula to a charge of transportation with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.

On Feb. 14, 2011, a 12-year-old girl was reported missing from her home after her mother walked into her room to wake her up for school and found her bed empty. The girl's stepmother used the Facebook account of one of the girl's friends and discovered conversations between the girl and Le.

It was eventually discovered that the pair had a month-long online relationship and had considered getting married.

Le, the girl, and Le's friend Dennis Nelson, 37, were eventually apprehended after the FBI and the California Highway Patrol stopped the rental car in which they were traveling. Nelson admitted taking Le to Montana to pick up Walker and bring her back to California.

Le and Nelson were initially brought back to Kalispell, where they were charged with custodial interference and accountability to custodial interference, respectively.

According to a release from the U.S. Department of Justice, Le intended to have a physical and romantic relationship with the victim once they were back in California.

Le faces between 10 years and life in prison, lifetime supervision, and a fine of up to $250,000 when he is sentenced May 23.

It is believed that Nelson has been transported back to California to face unrelated charges there.

Missoulian

Potomac man pleads guilty to attempted prostitution in Craigslist case

JANUARY 28, 2011 11:45 PM • BY CHELSI MOY OF THE MISSOULIAN

A 53-year-old federal Bureau of Land Management employee from Potomac pleaded guilty to one count of attempted prostitution in Missoula County Justice Court on Friday.

Dwight Gappert was identified as a client of a Missoula underage prostitution ring run by two University of Montana students on Craigslist.

On Friday, Gappert told Justice of the Peace Karen Orzech that while he chatted with some people on the Internet, he had "no way of knowing" that it was a prostitution ring.

"I apologize," he said. "I didn't go through with it."

Gappert was identified by one of the women who was part of the prostitution ring run by Richard Carpita, 30, and his roommate Anthony Brazington, 21. Both men have pleaded guilty to charges associated with pimping four women, three of which were under age 18.

Gappert's number was found in Carpita's cell phone, according to court records.

The judge sentenced Gappert to a suspended six-month jail sentence and $585 in fines and court fees.

Both Carpita and Brazington await sentencing on felony charges.

The case was investigated by Missoula County's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Reporter Chelsi Moy can be reached at 523-5260 or at chelsi.moy@missoulian.com.

Missoulian

Online cops preventing abuse: Internet task force has busted prostitution, predators - but parents have role, too

SEPTEMBER 19, 2010 12:00 AM • MISSOULIAN EDITORIAL

To say they were just doing their jobs would be to gloss over the fact that they have one of the most horrific jobs a person can do. No amount of pay can make up for the emotional and psychological battering endured on a regular basis by law enforcement officers with the Missoula Internet Crimes Against Children program.

At the very least, the police officers whose job it is to wade through the muck, gathering enough incriminating evidence to charge criminals who prey on children, should know how much we appreciate their efforts. Specifically, the Internet Crimes Against Children program should receive heaps of praise for its recent work leading to the arrest of two Missoula men for running a child prostitution ring, and for nabbing an alleged child sex predator from Stevensville at the same time. And these officers should have a promise from Missoulians that we will do all we can to help them keep our children safe from sexual predators who use the Internet to commit their crimes.

As Missoula County Sheriff's Detective T.J. McDermott pointed out in a Missoulian article on Sept. 11, people tend to think that things like child prostitution rings are the exclusive purview of big cities when obviously, they happen here, too. The arrest of the Stevensville man on charges of felony sexual abuse of children is just one recent reminder.

In that case, fortunately, the intended abuse never occurred thanks to the undercover work of a detective with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. According to public records, that detective, Chris Shermer, posing as a 14-year-old girl, was contacted by a man named Carl W. Nelson late last month. After a series of sexually explicit conversations, Shermer asked Nelson to meet him with a specific list of items: Sourpatch Kids candy, Diet Mountain Dew, and banana-flavored condoms. Nelson brought these things to the meeting, but instead of a young girl, he found Missoula police ready to arrest him.

The arrests made in the child prostitution ring were made following months of investigation stemming from a late May shoplifting incident. In that case, sheriff's deputies who responded to a report of a theft at a Lolo gas station interviewed two witnesses who told them that their suspect, Richard A. Carpita, was offering sex with a 16-year-old runaway for money.

More digging led officers to believe that Carpita and his roommate, Anthony J. Brazington, were soliciting sex with minors using Craigslist. The investigation, conducted with Detective Guy Baker of the Missoula Police Department, eventually turned up five teenage victims and several local "clients." Charges against these local men are forthcoming.

In the meantime, Carpita, a University of Montana student, has been charged with three counts of aggravated promotion of prostitution and one count of promoting prostitution. Brazington has been charged with conspiracy to commit aggravated promotion of prostitution and conspiracy to

commit promotion of prostitution. All these charges are felonies.

But none of these arrests might have been possible without the dedication of local law enforcement and the Internet Crimes Against Children program, which received grant money to link with different agencies in order to catch sexual predators and prevent the sexual exploitation of children. The federally funded program, which originally launched in 1999 in seven states, grew to include program funding for Montana in January 2007.

Now, it allows 24 Montana laws enforcement agencies to work together, receive specialized training and make use of additional computer equipment. It also helps fund undercover investigations - as well as public outreach.

Public education about the dangers posed by Internet use to children is necessary because, while we depend on officers like those with the Internet Crimes Against Children program to help keep our children safe, they should not - and cannot - do it alone. Parents must talk to their children about how to use the Internet safely.

This means talking to them about when and where they can go online - preferably, under adult supervision. And it means making sure they know not to provide personal information. For kids, it can be difficult to know where to draw this line, so parents need to make sure they understand the difference between information that is private and information that is public.

And most importantly, adults need to be constantly tapped into the virtual world in which their kids are participating, so that when something sketchy happens, they will be there to notice it - and help the officers with the Internet Crimes Against Children program put a stop to it.

Airworks@airworksmt.com

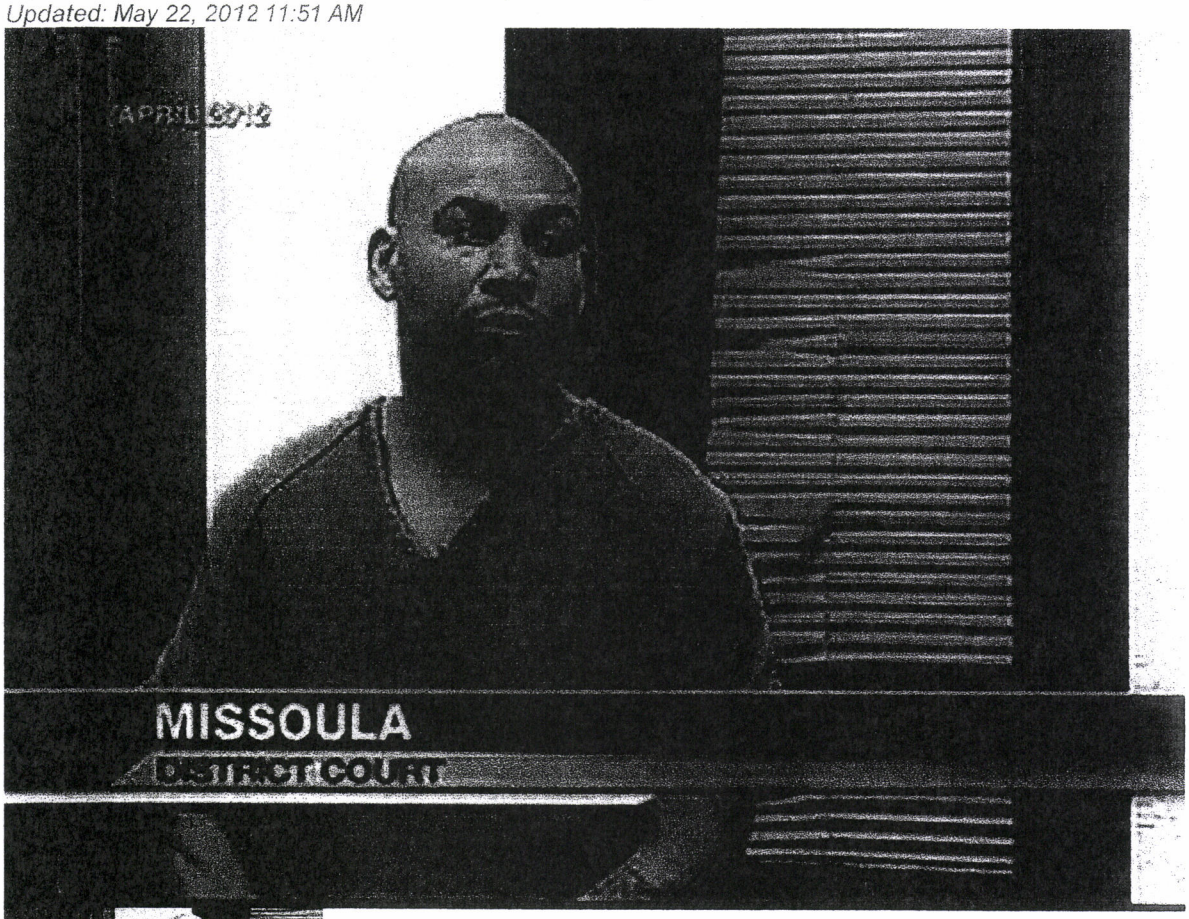
From: Diane Yarus [diane@airworksmt.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2013 12:41 PM
To: airworks@airworksmt.com
Subject: Cases Montana Prostitution May 21,2012. kPAX

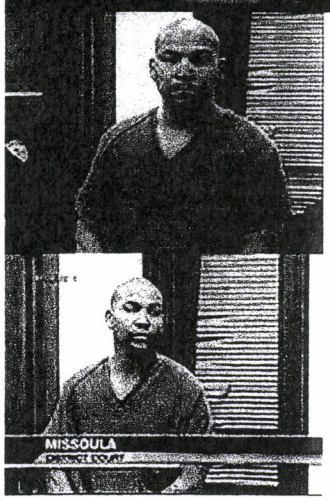
From Evernote:

Cases Montana Prostitution May 21,2012. kPAX

Man faces federal charges for MT prostitution business

Posted: May 21, 2012 6:11 PM by irina Cates (KPAX News)
Updated: May 22, 2012 11:51 AM





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MISSOULA- A Spokane man pleaded not guilty to federal charges for running a prostitution business in Missoula and Kalispell during a Monday court appearance.

Clifton Ray Oliver faces three felony charges including "transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity." He initially only faced state charges for the Missoula prostitution business.

The Missoula County Attorney's Office states in court documents that an employee at a Missoula motel told police Oliver checked in 11 times in less than a year, always paid cash and had two girls with him.

An undercover Missoula police officer met with one of the girls working for Oliver who offered to have sex with the undercover officer and that's when she and Oliver were arrested and charged.

Prosecutors say Oliver has prior convictions for similar crimes.

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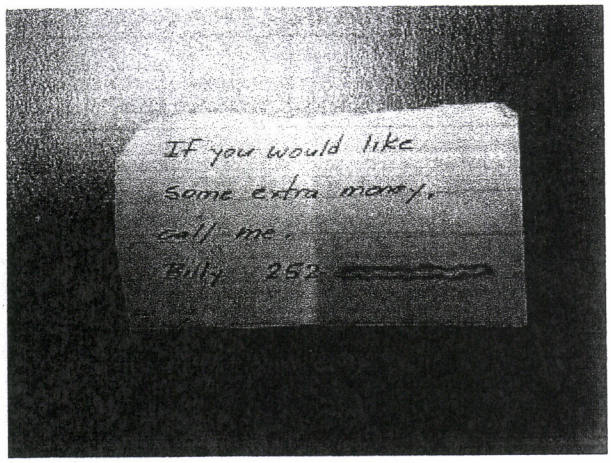
Irina Cates

Prostitution in the oil patch



MARCH 31, 2012 11:11 PM • LAUREN DONOVAN | BISMARCK TRIBUNE

WATFORD CITY — Managers of the Roosevelt Inn in Watford City have seen their share of different folks come and go in the Bakken boom. But three people who checked in for four nights a few weeks ago were a different kind of different.

For starters, having two women and a guy sharing one room was a bit unusual. But it's crowded and fairly expensive out there in the oil patch.

The real difference was that the two women slept all day and headed out at night in full makeup, big shiny hair and short clingy dresses.

It didn't take a brain like Einstein's to figure out what might be going on, and a late-night disturbance caused by two guys fighting over who got to go into the room first cleared any lingering doubt.

The Watford City police were contacted, but the cops' plan to bust the women for prostitution at a bar uptown was foiled when local patrons told the women that plainclothes' cops were on the premises.

Slade Herfindahl, the city's police chief, said the women admitted to prostitution, but he didn't have enough to make a case after getting burned as an undercover cop.

Turned out, one of the women was wanted on a criminal warrant in Illinois. The group was told to leave the hotel and sent back home.

Bethany Devlin and Lindsey Ybarra, hotel managers, say they work hard to run a clean, quiet, respectable facility with no tolerance for property damage and loud parties, much less working girls in the rooms.

"We don't want a reputation for that," Devlin said.

It is a fine line between what they might suspect and illegal behavior that affects other guests.

"Just because they dressed skimpy, we can't call the cops on that," said Ybarra. In cases where race is an issue, there is some concern that a report would be construed as discrimination, she said.

The suspects had booked a room for four nights and since they left, it's been quiet in town, at least as far as prostitution goes, and as far as Herfindahl knows.

He and his six officers have been on quite a run. Starting back in October and continuing through February, his department has made nine prostitution arrests and arrested a man for attempting to solicit sex.

They are the first prostitution arrests ever for the county, said deputy State's Attorney Ariston Johnson. They're twice as many as were made in October in a joint investigation with the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, a drug task force and Williston police.

"This is a direct result of (Herfindahl's) efforts to find and arrest them in our county. Without continued enforcement, it will only recur," Johnson said.

Williams County Sheriff Scott Busching said he knows that's not the extent of the problem.

"There's more (activity), but you prioritize. It's not something we can devote a person to fulltime. It's a Class B misdemeanor; they bond out and beat you home," he said.

Farther south in the patch, Stark County Sheriff Clarence Tuhy said his officers have not arrested any prostitutes. "We haven't gotten any calls; if we do, we'll sure as heck do an investigation," he said.

Dickinson Police Department Capt. David Wilkie said his department conducted a sting last year but made no arrests.

He said the department plans to increase work in that area when it fills two vacancies on the force.

Dickinson is usually a stop on the way to Williston, though police have identified some women who come through regularly and a group that travels through, he said

"It is a priority. It's not just two people hooking up, it's two people in an illegal activity. It's not victimless; it affects families, other people and there's a lot of money involved," he said.

Herfindahl said his department's strong arrest record isn't because Watford City attracts more prostitutes than other oil boom towns; it's more likely because prostitutes are more visible there.

"It's a small town, people notice more. We show success so the public is more apt to report to us when they know something's being done," he said.

He said the women are here for the same reason everyone else is — work and money.

"They are here for financial opportunity. They hear on CNN Money about the disposable income, the man-to-woman ratio. Some are dancers and say they're doing this until they can get a stripping spot," Herfindahl said. "The money is good. One told me she's made $160,000 a year. They do good business here."

Prostitution in North Dakota is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in prison and a $1,000 fine.

All but one Watford City case has been through the McKenzie County court system.

That one, from February, is still pending.

Herfindahl said most worrisome to him is that prostitution is part of other criminal behavior and

those he's arrested either have a history of, or warrants related to, drug traffic or more serious crimes. One of the department's first prostitution arrests was of a woman who'd done time for murder and had just been arrested in Williston the previous week, he said.

These arrests are not routine for a small, formerly rural department. Some of them leave the guys feeling like they need a shower afterward.

One, in February, was the arrest of a 35-year-old man, whose current address is Williston, who was reported to the department for soliciting sex with the male owner of a local rental property.

An officer contacted the man and arranged a meeting at what the department calls its "set," an off-site location it uses for drug buys and where supporting and armed officers provide backup and can clandestinely tape and film the transaction.

In this case, the male prostitute came to the location carrying a duffel bag, went into the bathroom and emerged wearing a wig, purple women's lingerie, black fishnet stockings and sling back high heels.

"He got on his knees on the couch, facing away from me, asking if we were gonna do it. I gave him $300 and said we had a deal," Herfindahl. At the word "deal," his two backup officers emerged and the arrest was made. The man pleaded guilty and was fined $500.

"I haven't seen that before and I hope I don't again," he said.

The case that bothers the police chief most of all also involved a man, but this one wasn't selling sex, he was trying to buy it.

In that case, the man was at the local drive-in in Watford City and engaged a young male waiter in conversation. He left a substantial tip and a written note, "If you would like some extra money, call me," with a fictitious name and actual cellphone number.

The young man, thinking the offer might be for truck driving or oil field work, called and met the guy at his truck at a nearby gas station.

Within a few minutes, the conversation "got dirty," and the man said he was willing to pay $150 for sex. The younger man said he was 16 (he wasn't, but the age added to the potential severity of the contact) and jumped out. He went to the police, who used the note to make their own contact.

Herfindahl, undercover, got the same solicitation. "I arrested that guy," for two counts of hiring an individual to engage in sexual activity, also a Class B misdemeanor, he said.

He said that case sticks with him as being the most reprehensible.

"Some kid should be able to work at a store in town without some guy soliciting him, but they all bother me. They're all kind of sad," he said.

So far, Herfindahl's are the only prostitution arrests in McKenzie County.

McKenzie County Sheriff Ron Rankin said his officers have looked into three reports of potential prostitution.

One, reportedly involving high school girls, was turned over to Fort Berthold Indian Reservation

tribal police because of the jurisdiction. Two others, one at a rural location and one in nearby Alexander, went "poof" when officers tried staking out the location, Rankin said.

"Traffic is still our worst problem here," the sheriff said.

There are fairly frequent and unsubstantiated rumors of women soliciting from truck to truck when drivers are lined up at disposal wells, both lawmen said.

Both said there isn't any evidence of a prostitution ring and Herfindahl said none of the cases involved human trafficking, in which the women are under physical or financial duress, or juveniles.

So far, the department hasn't set up an operation with the intent of busting both the prostitute and her "john," or customer. Herfindahl said removing one prostitute resolves many potential crimes, while busting the customer is only one crime. He said the department has plans in that area. "Be patient," he said.

Some of the Watford City cases started with citizens turning over to police the women's thinly disguised business cards.

The Internet is another way to find out whether prostitutes are in town.

Herfindahl regularly checks a website where women list their working names, phone numbers and communities they're working out of. This past week, there were none working in Watford City, eight in Williston and three in Minot.

"I think the word's getting out," Herfindahl said.

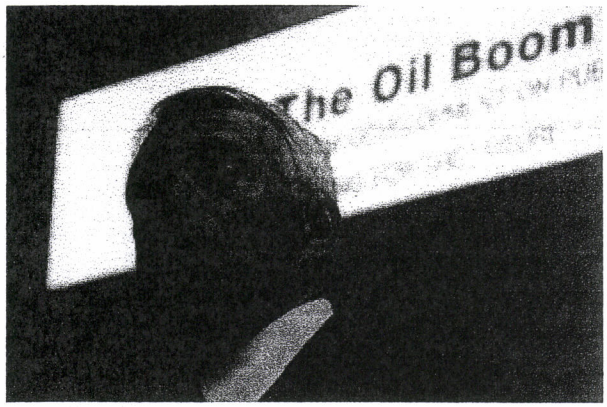
To illustrate how easy it is to make a "date," he called a number, talked to "Holly," and set up a plan to call her when he got to the lobby of the Airport International Inn in Williston. Over the speakerphone, she could be heard to say, "It's $300, for one hour."

A message left with Holly to be interviewed for this story has not been returned. Others named Veronica, Hailey and Nicole abruptly disconnected calls for interviews.

The Airport International Inn did not respond to two calls for comment.

BILLINGS GAZETTE

As Bakken oil booms, police agencies prepare for change



APRIL 23, 2012 6:00 AM • ASSOCIATED PRESS

GLASGOW — Drug crimes in Eastern Montana have more than doubled. Assaults in Dickinson, N.D., have increased fivefold in just two years. And the once-sleepy town of Plentywood has seen three assaults with weapons in the past few months — a prospect previously unheard of in the tiny community tucked against the Canada border.

Booming oil production has brought tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in new revenues to communities across a wide expanse of the Northern Plains. But it also has brought more crime, forcing law enforcement from the U.S. and Canada to deal with spiking offenses ranging from drug trafficking and gun crimes to prostitution.

The rural region is emerging as one of the top oil producing areas of North America. Officials say up to 30,000 more workers could descend on the Bakken oil fields of Montana, North Dakota and Saskatchewan in the next few years.

The recent kidnapping and brutal murder of Montana teacher Sherry Arnold tragically underscored the changes brought on by the rapid pace of drilling. Two men are in custody, but the case has left residents shaken and led to a huge rise in applications to carry concealed weapons in Montana and North Dakota.

In the wake of Arnold's killing in the town of Sidney, which is quickly being overtaken by the boom, federal prosecutors began a two-day retreat Monday in Glasgow for about 150 police, sheriffs, federal agents and other law enforcement to craft a common strategy to deal with rising crime.

Towns like Plentywood, population 1,600, were until recently places "you could send your kids to the pool in the summertime on their bikes and not have to worry about it," said Sheridan County Attorney Steven Howard.

"All those things are changing," he said, adding that the Arnold case "has had a chilling effect on our people."

Monday's conference already was being planned before Arnold's death, said Michael Cotter, the U.S. attorney for Montana. But Cotter said the killing illustrated the importance of close coordination among law enforcement as officials gird for more crime.

Government officials predict the boom could last another decade or more as companies tap into a reserve estimated by the U.S. Geological Survey to hold more than 4 billion barrels of crude.

Oil company executives say there's even more, upwards of 20 billion barrels that will be extracted using drilling techniques that were only recently perfected.

Towns like Dickinson already have seen the negative spinoff effects from workers hoping to cash in on the boom. For many agricultural communities, including Plentywood, officials say the changes have just begun.

The situation is exacerbated by a housing shortage that is spurring the construction of sprawling "man camps" that can accommodate hundreds of out-of-state oil workers.

The suspects in Arnold's killing — 48-year-old Lester Van Waters and 22-year-old Michael Spell — allegedly traveled to the Bakken from Colorado in search of jobs in the oil patch. Court records suggest Spell and Waters had been smoking crack cocaine and were living out of Waters' vehicle when they snatched Arnold off a Sidney street in the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 7.

Industry representatives say companies go to lengths to ensure the workers they hire won't cause trouble — either on the job or in the community.

Drug tests and background checks are standard for many companies, said Kari Cutting with North Dakota Petroleum Council. She added the lack of housing can quickly deter would-be workers who show up without a position already secured.

Cutting noted that neither Spell nor Waters was employed by the oil industry, and the two had been in the region only a short time before the alleged crime.

"We do know there are challenges," she said. "Any opportunity has challenges that need to be overcome, and we want to be part of the solution in all this."

Some law enforcement officials, including Valley County Sheriff Glen Meier, said the increase in crime has roughly tracked the increase in population, meaning the actual rate of offenses has been little changed.

"You have to put it into perspective. Ninety-nine percent of the people (working the oil fields) will be an asset to the community," he said.

Yet there are indications that communities and several Indian reservations in the Northern Plains have found themselves dealing with new types of crime more commonly associated with urban areas. Organized drug trafficking and prostitution rings top the list, officials said.

Mercer Armstrong with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the areas of southern Canada within the Bakken have seen a "major influx of criminality." That includes organized criminal enterprises from British Columbia moving into rural areas to establish the drug trade, he said.

The Bakken-area communities aren't the first to suffer the downsides of a boom, and Utah State University sociologist Richard Krannich said lessons can be drawn from other parts of the country where energy industry workers have come and gone.

"After the 'surprise' of rapid growth during the initial few years, most areas seemed to be reasonably successful in catching up," Krannich said.

In the U.S., federal agencies including the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are addressing the problems in the Bakken by adding new agents and trying to share

intelligence with state and local officials.

Montana and North Dakota also have more state troopers on the road, in part to address rising numbers of traffic offenses including driving while intoxicated.

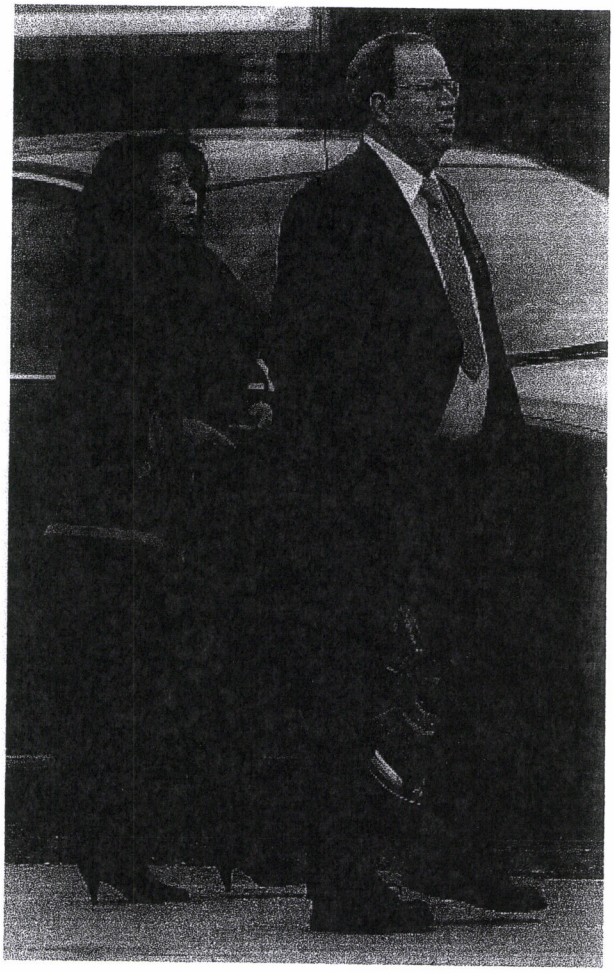
Some law enforcement agencies are having trouble filling posts. Qualified applicants will pass over deputy positions that start at less than $20 an hour to take oil field jobs that pay two to three times as much.

The result, said Tim Purdon, the U.S. attorney for North Dakota, is that police are in "100 percent reactive mode, running from call to call."

"Local departments have been squeezed to the point where they're having trouble performing proactive police works. We don't have the time," he said.

BILLINGS GAZETTE

Couple who ran massage parlors sentenced to 13 months each



FEBRUARY 01, 2012 2:36 PM • BY CLAIR JOHNSON
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A Billings couple who said their prostitution business was an "immaculately clean," taxpaying operation where consenting women practiced safe sex will spend 13 months in federal prison.

Chief U.S. District Judge Richard Cebull rejected a defense request for probation, ordering prison for Gregory L. McFarland, 52, and his wife, Myong Suk "Suzie" McFarland, 62, who pleaded guilty in August to interstate promotion of prostitution and to money laundering.

Anything less would be "a slap on the wrists" and deter no one from running illegal prostitution businesses, Cebull said. The sentence was at the low end of the guideline range of 12 months to 18 months.

The couple admitted to offering sexual services at their businesses — the Far West Sauna, 1211 Mullowney Lane, and the Shangri-La Spa and Sauna, 437 Bernard St.

As part of a plea agreement, the McFarlands agreed to a criminal forfeiture of $1,176,229 as prostitution proceeds in connection with the money laundering count.

A civil forfeiture of $206,209 includes $86,000 the government sought in a separate action against the McFarlands' home at 4605 Sticka Circle. The couple also forfeited $120,209 from bank and brokerage accounts to settle the civil case. Payments on the civil forfeiture will be credited to the criminal judgment.

"I'm terribly sorry," Gregory McFarland told the judge. "I don't believe incarceration is warranted, but I do understand the reason." McFarland called imprisonment "punishment for punishment sake."

Myong Suk McFarland made no statement.

Defense attorney Vern Woodward argued for probation or house arrest, saying the McFarlands

are "good, decent, kind and caring individuals."

While the McFarlands knew their business was illegal, Woodward called it an "atypical" prostitution case because they treated their employees with respect, ran a clean operation among consenting adults and filed tax returns.

The public humiliation and forfeitures already are a deterrent, and no one was harmed, he said. "The punishment should reflect the harm," he added.

"So what?" Cebull responded. "Does it lessen that fact that they violated the law? No."

The McFarlands, the judge said, knew "full well they were violating the law by promoting prostitution in Billings, Montana. They ignored the law. And I'm supposed to ignore the law because they're 'good people?'"

Woodward said he didn't think the sentence would be a deterrent.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kris McLean said the defense was trying to "cleanse a dirty business" that was "very, very profitable for years." Prostitution "tears at the fabric of communities" and is a serious matter, he said.

The couple faced a maximum of five years in prison and a possible $250,000 fine on the prostitution charge and a maximum 20 years and possible $500,000 fine on the money laundering count. Cebull allowed the McFarlands to report to prison when they are assigned to a facility.

The investigation began in about March 2005, when a Holiday Inn manager called the police to report that hotel guests complained that they had been offered sexual services at the Far West Sauna, McLean said.

Woodward said the duration of the investigation over several years showed that the crime is not a law enforcement priority.

The case took a long time, Police Chief Rich St. John said, because investigations into prostitution, possible human trafficking and money laundering are difficult. Federal investigators helped make sure the investigation was thorough, he said.

The police chief acknowledged that sexual services continue to be offered at Asian spas and said the department investigates complaints.

In the McFarland case, police investigators set up surveillance and talked to customers of both spas, the prosecution said. The customers, or "johns", told investigators about paying for sexual services. Detectives also visited the spas and recorded conversations about the door fees and how much more money would be needed once inside the spa. On one occasion, a prostitute talked openly about charges for various sex acts.

On Sept. 17, 2010, federal officers searched both businesses. Officers also searched the McFarlands' home and seized business records and records and ledger sheets with the names of women and allocations of money.

Income-tax records also showed that the McFarlands' business, OnJona Corp., paid 35 women, almost all of whom came from Minnesota, from 2005 until the search warrants were served.