

Looking back on being 'a human urinal'

Program helps women who have been prostitutes change their lives.

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Women who have sold sex for drugs describe prostitution as "a wound" from which they need to heal — just as they need to heal from the sexual and physical abuse and other traumas that preceded their addictions.

"No one wants to do it," said a 37-year-old woman, who began prostituting on West Badger Road a few years ago after she became addicted to crack. She likened prostitution to the act of cutting oneself. "It's a coping mechanism for some," she said, adding, "It hurts every woman who does it."

"There's something that happened before the drug use," said Jan Miyasaki, director of ARC Community Service's Project Respect, which helps women involved in prostitution to change their lives.

Four women now working with Project Respect and other treatment programs agreed to talk about their experiences. They asked not to be named to protect their privacy as they try to overcome the stigma associated with prostitution.

"You stigmatize yourself," said a 39-year-old woman. She said prostituting made her feel like "a human urinal." But, she said, Project Respect "lets us know that we are somebody. We're not just prostitutes. We're not just crack-heads. It helps us change the way we think of ourselves." She described Project Respect as a "safe place" where women can share experiences that are otherwise unspeakable — "to talk about it" and "to let it go."

All of the women said they were sexually abused, most as children. One of them, 52, said

To get help

Project Respect provides counseling, crisis intervention and other support services for women who have been involved in prostitution or have been sexually exploited. Contact Project Respect at 283-6435.

she probably started prostituting at age 7, while her mother was caught up in drinking and gambling and a neighbor in Chicago would give her candy and nice clothes for sitting on his lap.

Others described years of sexual abuse by their brothers and husbands. "I hated sex," said the 39-year-old woman, who found that smoking crack was the only thing that made her feel sexually aroused. But her addiction cost her almost everything. "I went from having a lot of money to having nothing," she said. "I went from over 500 pairs of shoes to not one outfit." After she began prostituting, she said, "My self-esteem was dirt." Like others, she said she came to Project Respect because "I don't want to die."

Some women find their way to the program after being arrested for prostitution. By attending the program, they could have their fines waived and keep the charges off their records. Others hear about the program and Miyasaki through word of mouth.

"Once you get marked with a stigma it's hard to change," said Miyasaki, who has been helping women involved in prostitution to overcome such barriers for 14 years. "They're an inspiration," she said. "Their desire to change isn't always going to be known to people who see them on the streets. They really are people who want to live different lives."

"I don't know what it will be, but it will be something productive," the 37-year-old said of her future. "I'm not sure where it will go, I'm kind of excited about that. I don't want to give myself to anybody anymore. I want to work for a living and chop lettuce."

Prostitutes and johns are on cops' radar



JOHN MANIACI - State Journal

Madison police arrest a man during a prostitution sting in the West Badger Road neighborhood, where they are combining enforcement with education and outreach in an effort to change the behaviors of both the prostitutes who frequent the area and the johns who patronize them.

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Explosion of illegal activity along one section of Badger Road prompts a sting operation.

Without even seeing her face, neighborhood officer Susan Krause recognizes the woman in a shapeless coat walking ahead of her soon after nightfall on West Badger Road where drug-addicted prostitutes trade sex for crack or heroin, or money to pay for their next fix.

Krause calls out the name of the 37-year-old woman, who — like other prostitutes arrested in this South Side neighborhood bordering the Beltline between South Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road — is barred from the area as a condition of her bail.

The woman stops, then slowly turns to face Krause and Officer Tammi Droessler, who could arrest her on the spot.



JOHN MANIACI - State Journal

Police keep track of the offers received by two undercover officers posing as prostitutes.

Instead, Krause asks her if she is OK, then reminds her about a new drop-in program where prostitutes can get a hot meal — like the hot wings Krause cooked up and sent to a recent gathering — along with help to get off drugs and away from the street.

"And we don't want to see you out here again tonight," adds Droessler.

The drop-in program, run by ARC Community Services' Respect Project on Prostitution, is part of a wide-reaching effort to



STEVE APPS - State Journal

Neighborhood officer Susan Krause puts up signs symbolically warning "no sex for money" near West Badger Road and Cypress Way the day before a prostitution sting netted 14 arrests, most of them alleged johns.

confront the prostitution that police say exploded last summer near Badger Road and Cypress Way, just around the corner from the South Police District headquarters.

"Lieutenants were being solicited, the captain," Droessler said.

One man was picking up prostitutes in a van emblazoned with the name of the South Side construction company where he worked, said Krause, who spoke to the company president repeatedly before the employee stopped showing up in the van. He, w

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• Project Respect helps women break cycle of prostitution, drug addiction.

ANATOMY OF A STING

Photos by JOHN MANIACI - State Journal



later cited in his own vehicle. It wasn't just the amount of prostitution that prompted Detective Rosa Aguilu to urge the area's community policing team to do more to address the problem. It was the brutal assaults last spring and summer on three women, two known to be prostitutes.

"They're victims, too," Aguilu said. "We can't send a message this is OK... One of them is going to get killed."

Because prostitutes are involved in illegal activity, Aguilu said, "they're an easy target to be victimized" because people either think they won't go to the police, or say, "Who's going to believe them?"

Though activity has lessened some, Krause said, prostitution still goes on in the neighborhood night and day. She and Droessler have a file of more than 50 prostitutes known to work the loop traced by West Badger, Cypress, Magnolia Lane and Catalpa and Fish Hatchery roads, or to venture a few blocks south to Pecca Place and Ann Street, along the Bellline. The officers can point out the parking lots and back stairwells where the women turn tricks, and the flophouses where they do drugs.

Simply arresting the prostitutes and the men who patronize them isn't solving the problem, Krause said, adding, "You have to be creative."

Yard signs used

Last month, Krause put up yard signs in the area symbolically warning "no sex for money" — depicted by the word "sex" surrounded by dollar signs in a red circle with a slash through it — the day before a prostitution sting that netted 14 arrests, nearly all of them alleged johns. When she went to remove the signs about an hour and a half later, Krause found a condora hanging from one of them.

Police also are planting a "john school" for the men arrested in such stings. By opting to attend the class, offenders could have a \$676 city fine waived and keep the charge off their records. They would also learn about the legal and health risks of prostitution, and hear former prostitutes tell how paying for sex keeps the women addicted to drugs.

When a panel of former prostitutes spoke at a similar John school attended by eight men in 2005, Aguilu said, "you could see" the impact the women had on the men. They asked the men "to act like they would see their daughters, their mothers, their wives, their sisters."

Police arrest a man for loitering for purposes of soliciting prostitutes after his vehicle was observed over several hours in the West Badger Road area during a recent sting.

The bumper sticker

But that doesn't mean they're letting up on enforcement, Krause said.

In the November sting, 11 men and one juvenile, ranging from 16 to 60, were arrested for loitering for the purposes of soliciting prostitutes. They included a UW-Madison student, a recovering addict and a man who was on his way to get medicine for his pregnant girlfriend. Two of the men had children's car seats in their vehicles.

They started showing up soon after two female undercover officers hit the street posing as prostitutes, and the traffic never let up throughout the cold, rainy and snowy night.

Russell E. Green, 51 — who Droessler said had the neatest glove compartment she'd ever seen — was picked up after offering to pay an undercover officer \$20 for "lovin'," Droessler said.

He told police he was grateful they had stopped him from doing something he shouldn't, Droessler said. "He admitted he made a mistake and felt it could save his life," she said.

UW-Madison student Jamal S. Dirie, 30 — whose numerous bumper stickers, including a depiction of Che Guevara, combined messages of anti-oppression and Islam — left the police station in tears after his arrest. He told police he had an exam the next day and had just had a fight with his fiancée.

"There's (expletive) cops everywhere — here's \$20 for sex," Krause said one of the undercover officers said he told her.

He later called police searching for the \$22 that was in his car.

"There's lots of white old men trolling around, too," Krause said. "We've got all types of people out here."

Prostitution occurs in different forms throughout the city, police say. Some johns find prostitutes on online sites such as Craigslist. Others arrange standing dates with the same woman. Police say the prostitutes in the West Badger neighborhood are there because the drugs are there.

"Garnmon Road, Raymond Road and alcohol treatment facility and spoke on condition of anonymity. "Badger's the last place you go."

In the past five years, the number of city citations issued to prostitutes and johns has increased steadily, from five in 2003 to 32 through October of this year — 25 in the West Badger area alone. Those arrests, mostly made in stings, do not include cases referred to the Dane County district attorney.

"You can always clean up a neighborhood by pushing the problem somewhere else," Aguilu said. But, she added, "we haven't done anything to solve the problem."

Instead, police are hoping to change the behaviors of both prostitutes and johns through education and outreach, Krause said.

Krause has also sent "Dear John" letters to owners of vehicles observed "cruising" in the neighborhood, with a warning to avoid the area unless they have legitimate business there.

And if johns are using vehicles registered to their significant others, Krause said, "I will call wives and girlfriends."

Police are also discussing posting offenders' photographs in a "John Hall of Shame" on the police department's Web site.

'All types of people'

Because of the high number of Hispanic men arrested for soliciting in the West Badger neighborhood — and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, among Latina women who may be contracting them from male partners who patronize prostitutes — police have also enlisted the help of Madison's Spanish-language radio station La Movida.

The station recently has begun running public service announcements and recently aired a call-in program with representatives from the police department and Latino Health Council.

Had been at bar

Juan Carlos Rojas Torrijos, 27, of Middleton, told Aguilo he heard about the risk of STDs on the La Movidia program. He said he had been on his way to a drugstore to get medicine for his pregnant girlfriend — which the girlfriend confirmed to police — when he offered an undercover officer \$15 for sex.

Tim L. Peterson, 60, of Monona, who has a 2005 prostitution conviction, told police he had been at the nearby Pitcher's Pub and was trying to find a buddy who lives in the neighborhood when he encountered an undercover officer and "just wanted to go somewhere and party."

"We might buy that if you didn't circle the block six or seven times," Officer Chris Kobinsky said.

Under a city ordinance police can arrest someone for just repeatedly driving through a known area of prostitution, as they did with Arturo Villalobos Solorio, 37, whom they observed circling the neighborhood numerous times over several hours.

"I'm surprised you don't have the dogs and helicopters," said Phillip T. Thomas, 18, who was arrested along with a 16-year-old companion around 12:30 a.m. Thomas told police the two thought it would be funny to drive up to a prostitute and ask what a specific sex act would cost.

Krause, who knows Thomas' family from her work as a neighborhood officer, told him, "I think I could see you mom shaking her head now."

"You know what my mom tells us?" he replied in a good-natured banter. "She gonna have you all 'ove for a barbecue."

Abused as children

Similarly, Krause has "a pretty good relationship" with the neighborhood prostitutes she knows by name and who know her as "Officer Sue."

"Some of these women have been working for decades," Krause said, adding that most were sexually abused as children and many have children in foster care. Others are pregnant.

One woman "appeared to be soliciting with a 2-year-old on her hip," Droessler said. Another was six months pregnant when she was arrested.

"We're trying to pull them up," Krause said, adding that through Project Respect, the women can get into treatment, find housing and get jobs. "We're trying to knit together that safety net."

So far, Krause said, the effort has made a little dent. Among her success stories is a mother who was using drugs and was "in bad shape" before she got help and stopped prostituting.

Now, Krause said, "Every time her sister sees me, she hugs me. For her, it worked."

The same woman

But for many others, it hasn't — at least not yet. During the last wave of the sting, Officer Lori Chalecki radioed to other officers: "I've got one of the real ones (prostitutes) working. I need someone to come out here and tell her ... to say away."

Then Chalecki recognized the woman as Therese N. Jackson, who had been arrested a few days earlier for violating her bail by being in the area. It was the same woman Krause had encountered on the sidewalk the week before.

As Krause frisked her before another officer took her to jail, Jackson, who wore only a bra under her winter coat, asked, "Why do guys keep (expletive) with me? All these people out here — why do you keep (expletive) with me?"