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Dayton police think safe house might deter prostitution

By [Lucas Sullivan](#)
Staff Writer

Saturday, March 14, 2009

DAYTON — Jessica Brown knew what to do when she saw the flashing lights of the police cruiser from the passenger seat of a stranger's car.

"Whatever you do, don't tell them that I said an act or a price," she told the man who picked her up minutes before.

Brown had already offered to have sex with the man for \$40. She didn't know the man sitting next to her on Tuesday, March 10, was an undercover Dayton police officer.

It was the 19th time since 2003 Brown, 29, has been arrested for soliciting sex or prostitution, according to jail records.

It is obvious jail is not a deterrent for her or the nearly 60 other prostitutes Dayton officers arrested at least twice in 2008.

To deal with the problem, police want to establish the city's first-ever rehabilitation home for prostitutes.

Lt. Brian Johns is spearheading discussions with nonprofit centers and leaders of safe houses from other cities to try to come up with funding and the necessary social services to operate the home.

The idea comes in the wake of a spike in HIV-infected prostitutes arrested by officers in 2008.

Twelve prostitutes arrested last year, including two men, were HIV positive, up from less than a handful in 2007 and 2006, according to police.

Johns said it's the largest jump he's seen in his 10 years.

Brown is not one of the 12, though she will be given another HIV test while in jail on \$10,000 bond, Johns said.

Brown told officers she is addicted to heroin and has been arrested a handful of times on drug-related charges, according to jail records.

"Many of these women are prostituting because they are addicted to drugs and need the money," Chief Richard Biehl said. "We need to get them into an environment where they see the benefits of being clean."

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Johns said he hopes meeting with nonprofits and corporate leaders will generate funding ideas. He said the city is considering applying for federal stimulus funds to start the home.

"It's a problem that has to be addressed because prostitution affects the entire community," Biehl said. "There is a quality of life issue here, along with the general welfare of citizens in areas where prostitution is a problem."

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-2494 or lsullivan@DaytonDailyNews.com.

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