

One Community Has Called the Question

My Word

The following clarification is offered in response to Scott Maxwell's recent comments which reflected his opinion that the investigation into a corporation that was knowingly publishing advertisements from prostitutes was not warranted, in light of the rise in violent crime. It's difficult for someone who lacks first hand experience with the vice and drug culture to understand how they are intertwined with violent crime or their negative effect on the quality of life in Central Florida.

First the misconception that this investigation took two years should be clarified, although the investigation spanned two years, the undercover evidence gathering portion of this investigation took only about eight hours (24 visits to place prostitution ads and 5 phone calls) to complete. That time, evidence purchases, plus the administrative time to prepare the prosecution is typically passed on as a cost paid by the defendants.

During that two-year time span, MBI agents also conducted 112 other vice related investigations, not including the hundreds of investigations and arrests conducted by the MBI Narcotics Section. Another misconception is that MBI has a large amount of personnel assigned to vice enforcement. MBI is primarily a narcotics task force and only has three (3) investigators, of the more than 3100 sworn officers in our jurisdiction, assigned to respond to vice complaints, monitor the Adult Entertainment industry and keep organized vice operations from comfortably settling in Central Florida.

In the larger picture, many people see these ads for prostitution services and wonder, how can publications run such obvious advertisements? That is an excellent question, whose answer points to a nationwide problem of greed amongst some elements of corporate America, as most large metropolitan area phone books and many weekly advertising publications make millions of dollars in advertising by supporting the prostitution trade. At the root of the problem are corporations that create a "business culture" that make it permissible for employees and the corporation to profit from selling these obvious prostitution advertisements.

After 29 years of vice investigations, MBI has learned that publications that design specific advertising categories which primarily promote sex for sale support the growth of the organized prostitution trade in our community. In 1997, our local phone books and weekly publications agreed to do the right thing and stop the practice. In recent years, the problem surfaced again with one local publication. The MBI made several unsuccessful attempts to resolve the problem with the publication's corporate leadership, to include providing a list of 88 arrests resulting from their advertisements. As the problem could not be solved by corporate cooperation, the evidence in the investigation was presented to the Orange County Grand Jury, which returned with indictments for the corporation and the three advertising executives. By doing so, the Grand Jury has answered the above posed question by saying; they can't do that legally—at least not in our community.