

Oriental health spa is focus of picketing

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Since the raids, only one spa — Osaka Oriental Health Spa, 38499 10 Mile — has closed. "It's temporarily closed down. I'm speculating that it's due to a loss of clientele," Dwyer said.

OWNERS of the buildings housing two of the spas on Orchard Lake Road — Sun Oriental and Tokyo Oriental — have responded to police requests to prevent any illegal sexual activity. "They have already given notice that they intend on evicting. But at this time, their requests have not been honored by the (spa) operators. It might be easier to evict after the trials," Dwyer said.

Although four spas remain open, business is down 70-75 percent, Dwyer said. Media attention and publicity about alleged sexual activity appears to be the cause for the drop in business, he added.

Two of the building owners are from Southfield, one from Livonia, another from West Bloomfield Township and one from Redford Township. The building owners do not operate the spas.

The October raids were the result of a six-week police investigation that began with a letter of complaint from an unnamed Farmington Hills resident, Dwyer said.

THE LETTER stemmed from the resident's visit to the grand opening of Sapporo Kim's at 30332 Nine Mile.

Wrote the resident:

"I came in the front door and had to wait in a small hallway until someone could buzz me in. A man came in the front door after I did, and he seemed very embarrassed and acted rather strange to see me. At this time, I had no idea what kind of place this was.

"I rang the buzzer and a man looking like an Oriental version of Dick the Bruiser answered. He told me this was not a regular health club, it was massages only, and cash only. He then proceeded to get into an argument about the cash with the massage lady, who was dressed in a tiny leopardskin bathing suit."

Of the 17 arrested and charged with misdemeanor ordinance violations, 14 are Korean citizens, one is a Japanese citizen and two are U.S. citizens.

Although police officials notified the U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service, Dwyer doesn't expect immediate action from the federal agencies. "I don't see anything down the road for several months," Dwyer said. "I just hope they follow up."

FEDERAL AGENCIES are investigating whether there's any connection between the alleged prostitution in Farmington Hills and an international organization, thought to be controlled by Koreans, that recruits U.S. servicemen to marry Korean women and bring them into the

country. Servicemen are paid an estimated \$5,000 to marry the women and another \$2,000-\$3,000 to divorce them once in the United States, Dwyer said.

Korean women are placed in spas to work and repay the money owed to the international organization for marriage and divorce proceedings. "No more has come down on an organized ring," Dwyer said. "It takes several months."

But Farmington Hills is not the only community in which health spas — suspected of providing illegal sex — are springing up. After talking with other law enforcement agencies, "I think we have identified something that is a major concern

across the state," Dwyer said.

In many cases, most of the women arrested in connection with suspected prostitution in health spas "are left to their own devices" and often do not appear in court when scheduled, Dwyer said. Dwyer believes media attention has put pressure on spa operators to prevail in the Farmington Hills cases.

"It appears the operators — someone — are providing attorneys for the women. There is a lot of concern by the operators to take the initiative to hire attorneys for these females."

"I firmly believe at least the majority of these women will be in the courts in January," Dwyer said.

WHILE THE 17 suspects await court dates, Farmington Hills officials are putting together an ordinance — similar to one recently adopted in West Bloomfield Township — that would restrict "illegal-type health spas," Dwyer said.

"We hope to have an ordinance presented at the first of the year. It would be a better tool to enforce, and to monitor illegal activity. We're looking to put more teeth into it than West Bloomfield (did)," he said.

The 17 arrested in the October police raids were charged under city ordinance, which carries stiffer penalties than state law. Under city

ordinance, the maximum penalty upon conviction of aiding and abetting prostitution and soliciting and soliciting — charges lodged against the 17 — is 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine, Dwyer said.

Besides being illegal, prostitution "brings a lot of undesirable into the community — people with emotional and psychological problems. These type of people have to turn to prostitutes to satisfy sexual desires," Dwyer said.

Prostitution also "brings in other criminal elements — robbery, purse snatching . . . The customers do sometimes become victims of the criminal element, too," he said.

Group leader tries to rally support

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Sharon Chilson considers a recent Oriental health spa closing a victory for her Citizens for a Decent Community (CDC).

But despite the Farmington Hills-based group's efforts, businesses around the spas and churches in the area have not been supportive on the whole, Chilson said. The group protests alleged prostitution activity in the storefront spas.

According to Farmington Hills Police, the Osaka Oriental Health Spa, 38499 10 Mile, closed recently for economic reasons.

Telephone lines at the business are disconnected. The closing left four spas operating in the city — two on Nine Mile Road and two on Orchard Lake Road.

"I'd like to think our efforts helped (in the spa closing). We have no doubt we are going to get rid of the rest of them," Chilson said.

SATURDAY'S PICKETING was an effort to generate community

support. More picketing is planned, Chilson said.

Businesses that aren't supportive of the group apparently "don't want to alienate their clientele, some of whom patronize the spas. Some take a 'do not care' attitude. They thought they'd have more to lose," Chilson said.

Chilson said she and supporters have received obscene telephone calls since a December television appearance and a recent mailing of 1,000 flyers containing information about picketing. Callers "sounded like they were American men and Oriental women," Chilson said.

CDC members have also been followed, and local police have offered extra protection, including patrols, near members' homes, Chilson said.

The group was formed shortly after Farmington Hills Police raided four Oriental spas Oct. 7-8 and charged 16 Oriental women and one man with illegal sexual activity. The group was formed in an effort to cut into the spas' business, Chilson said.

THE RAIDS were the result of a

six-week police investigation stemming from residents' complaints of alleged prostitution and other sex-related offenses at the spas, police said.

Group members have coordinated surveillance, including logging license plate numbers at all spas, which, Chilson said, "really upsets" the clients.

"We've made a habit of driving up behind them (clients) and flashing our car lights at them," she said. From surveillance, Chilson describes the average spa client as a young, white male, who looks "well-respected," dresses in a suit and topcoat and drives a nice car. Most cars have had Michigan plates.

Surveillance is also being done from local houses and some businesses, Chilson added.

"THE PEOPLE living close by are the most concerned," said Chilson, who lives in the Nine Mile-Middlebelt area.

One CDC member has a telephone number similar to the closed 10 Mile spa and used to receive late-night calls from around the country, Chilson said.

Federal agencies continue to investigate whether there's any connection between the people arrested and an international prostitution ring, Chief William Dwyer said.

Fourteen of 17 arrested for misdemeanor violations during the police raid were Korean citizens. "One Korean church elder called these 'isolated incidences,'" Chilson said.

"We are concerned that if we close them (the spas) down, the women will still be caught up in it (alleged prostitution)," she added.

THE CDC is trying to find a way to assist the women who work at the spas. Unless they're involved with alcohol or drugs, they can't be assisted through governmental programs, Chilson said.

Chilson said she moved from Detroit to Farmington Hills in 1978 "to live in a nicer community."

Farmington Hills is good for spa operators and customers, Chilson said, because of the low incidence of crime.

"We want to stop it (the alleged prostitution) before it gets out of hand," she said.

'I think we have identified something that is a major concern across the state.'

—William Dwyer
Farmington Hills police chief

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