

Solicitation is alleged at 2 Oriental health spas in Southfield



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

After a six-month investigation, Southfield police raided two Southfield Oriental health spas and charged five women with accosting and soliciting.

Continued from Page 1

A combination of 14 officers executed arrest warrants issued by the Oakland County Prosecutor's office as a result of a six-month investigation initiated by the Southfield Police Department investigation division vice unit. More arrests are expected as the investigation continues.

SOUTHFIELD POLICE Chief Ronald Fasbinder said he hopes the city will padlock the two operations. The city council recently adopted an ordinance regulating massage parlors, patterned after a measure passed in Farmington Hills. The Southfield ordinance, which goes into effect Dec. 22, requires spas to be licensed.

"We've received complaints from some people who frequented the spas," Palmquist said.

"One person complained of being accosted and another said he was overcharged on his credit card. Men were at the spas when they were raided. They were interviewed but they weren't arrested because they weren't involved in any sexual activity," Palmquist said.

Shogun owner Shinn, filed suit recently in U.S. District Court in Detroit, after she was denied a business license for her Tokyo Oriental Health Spa in Farmington Hills.

The lawsuit claims the Farmington Hills ordinance is unconstitutional and names the city council and other officials in that community.

MORE THAN 60 HEALTH spas have opened in Michigan in recent years. A total of 125 women have been arrested on charges related to prostitution and illicit sex in Oriental health spas.

In early March, police investigators from several states and across Michigan met in Southfield to exchange information. Spas have brought alleged prostitution activities to the suburbs and appear to be tied through a loose-knit network. Speculation is that spas are linked to organized crime.

Although investigations into oriental health spas began with arrests on prostitution-related charges, authorities speculate that spas may be linked to Korean organized crime

and are laundering money for a Korean-based crime syndicate.

When five Oriental health spas were raided in Farmington last fall, bank receipts totaling almost \$30,000 for one day were discovered in one spa.

What has surfaced in investigation conducted by the FBI is that American servicemen are paid from \$3,000 to \$5,000 to marry Korean girls so that they can come to America and obtain U.S. citizenship. In some cases, servicemen are even paid a second sum of money for divorces, according to police.

Once in the U.S. and abandoned by their husbands, women are recruited into spas in order to make a living.

Monitor driving habits

Dec. 14-20 is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week.

The best gift you can give a friend or family member this holiday season is this bit of advice: "Don't drink and drive," so said MercyCare Immediate Care Center, Farmington Hills.

The celebration of Christmas and the New Year brings on the anticipation of holiday partying.

"Before you gear up to celebrate the approaching holiday season, it's important to remember that drinking and driving do not mix," warned Dr. Thomas J. Petinga Jr., medical director of the MercyCare Immediate Care Centers, affiliated with St. Joseph Mercy Hospital.

If you are planning a party or social gathering, Petinga shares the following precautions to ensure that guests don't overindulge in alcohol.

- Serve food at your parties. Eating helps slow the absorption of alcohol in the blood and it can also distract your guests from drinking.
- Serve non-alcoholic drinks whenever possible (i.e. non-alcoholic strawberry daiquiris or pina colodas, Perrier water, club soda or juice).
- Don't extend an open bar to your guests. Avoid refills until a drink is finished. Carefully measure all drinks with a shot glass (one jigger) and avoid mixing doubles.
- Designate the sober partygoers as drivers. Encourage your guests to "share-ride" to the party. Also, suggest that designated or sober guests hold on to the car keys.
- Provide alternate transportation or call a taxi to drive the intoxicated guests home. If necessary, suggest that an intoxicated guest spend the night at your house.
- When the party ends, only return keys to those who are capable of driving.

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