

Narcotics push leads to prostitution sting

By Scott E. Williams

The Daily News

Published April 6, 2005

DICKINSON — More than one truck circled the block several times before its driver stopped to talk to the woman in shorts, who was walking in the 1100 block of FM 517.

One man who stopped was not traveling alone.

"Look at that," said police Lt. Arnold Moreno. "He's got a baby in there. I can't believe it."

Several men drove off without agreeing to pay for sex, although it was not clear whether they knew they were talking to undercover police officers.

Four men found out the hard way, however. Police arrested them on charges of soliciting a prostitute.

Police conducted the sting Tuesday, with undercover officers from Galveston acting as prostitutes.

Police called it "phase two" of the area-wide narcotics operation that kicked into gear with a sweep in January.

Phase two got rained out early Tuesday afternoon, but officers said they would be back.

"We want to get all the undesirables off the streets," said Police Chief Ron Morales. "We want those people looking for prostitutes in our area to know that may very well be a police officer you're approaching."

In January, police arrested about 30 people and filed charges against more than a dozen more in a drug case that took several agencies months to put together.

Moreno said prostitution was a symptom of the drug problem that police were fighting.

"They're not doing that to maintain their mansions," Moreno said. "They're doing it because they want to get some money to buy that crack rock. But they wouldn't be here if people weren't offering them money here."

Police towed the vehicles of all four men, but returned one pickup truck because it belonged to Shrine of the True Cross Catholic Church, where the arrested man worked.

"I'm not happy about it, but I'll ruin people's lives, if I have to, to get this out of our community," Morales said, promising more undercover operations were coming sooner than many people would think.

+++

Police arrested four men, charged with solicitation of prostitution, in a sting operation Tuesday. Those charged were:

- Roberto Casas, 58, Dickinson.
- James Johnson, 55, La Marque.
- James Lee, 42, Dickinson.

- Ricky Whipple, 51, Bacliff.