



## Genesee County Prosecutor's Office David Leyton, Prosecutor



# Craigslist crackdown results in prostitution charges for seven in Genesee County

By [Laura Angus | Flint Journal](#)

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**GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan** — Some local women are accused of offering of selling something unusual on Craigslist — themselves.

Seven people, including a Flint Township couple, are charged with prostitution after authorities say they wanted to be paid for “adult services” listed on the site.

“I think it’s fair to say the prostitution has crossed the line from Dort Highway and (into) our homes,” said Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell.

Sheriff’s investigators conducted the Craigslist crackdown this summer after discovering fishy sounding ads from women looking for “fun.”

In most cases, police said the women quoted fees for sex as soon as the police posing as Johns called the numbers.

One of the women busted over the summer was still advertising on the site Wednesday — three months after sheriff’s investigators arrested her for prostitution at her Flint Township home.

The ad — which includes a phone number — promises “customer appreciation... while summer still last!!” So far this month, Craigslist has 16 postings for local adult services, some with photos of women with blurred faces wearing lingerie.

“Anywhere you can access the Internet, you can solicit a prostitute,” Pickell said.

Tuesday, Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton issued charges against six women and a man arrested during the summer sting: Heather D. Lawson, 31, of Flint Township; Jerry L. Lawson, 33, of Flint Township; Sarah E. Briggs, 18, of East Lansing; Katherine E. Shaler, 21, of Owosso; Danielle N. Perrone, 36, of Brighton; Christine M. Barnes, 45, of Burton; and Bakir McKinney, 30, of Flint.

Five were arrested at Burton motels; the Lawsons were arrested at their Flint Township home.

Pickell said his office began taking a close look at Craigslist ads after a Boston University medical student was accused of killing a woman in April after answering her ad in the now-defunct erotic services section of the site.

Dubbed the “Craigslist Killer,” Phillip Markoff is expected to face trial next year for the killing and was indicted in a Rhode Island killing that also allegedly stemmed from a Craigslist ad.

Pickell worries that anyone at any age could go on Craigslist and wind up on the sex pages “simply by clicking a mouse.”

“You can go from (children’s) toys to exotic and adult,” he said.

The company did away with “erotic services” ads after the Markoff arrest and replaced it with “adult services” in May, upping the price to post an adult ad to \$10 from \$5.

Craigslist Chief Executive Officer Jim Buckmaster said in a posting on the Web site that employees will review all adult services ads before posting them online.

The Journal could not reach Buckmaster for comment Wednesday.

He said prostitutes soliciting on Craigslist can charge more on the street and control the environment, but any form of prostitution poses a risk for the prostitute and the john — and for the community where it’s happening.

“These types of solicitations lead up to violence, and they’re very problematic for a community,” he said.

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