

# 5 from St. Paul charged in multistate sex ring

Authorities believe there are more victims than those listed in the charges.

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Evans



Foster



Keller



Williams



Cross

Five St. Paul residents were charged Tuesday in a multistate sex-trafficking ring that used physical abuse, intimidation and drugs to coerce victims to comply.

Each faces seven counts for allegedly trafficking multiple victims, including a 16- and 17-year-old, in 2013 and 2014. Suspects posted ads for sex on backpage.com in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and Georgia, according to criminal com-

plaints in Ramsey County District Court.

“Let’s make no mistake,” said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. “This is truly about greed and money.”

Charged with two counts of first-degree sex-trafficking, three counts of second-degree sex-trafficking and two counts of conspiracy to commit a felony are: Suwan D. Cross, 19; Thomas W. Evans, 25; Yolanda K. Foster, 28; Doris M. Keller, 38; and Ishmael J. Williams, 19.

Cross was charged via warrant and was not in custody late Tuesday. The other suspects were booked into the Ramsey County jail.

Choi said that the ring was large and sophisticated, and likely had more victims than those listed in the charges. Assistant St. Paul Police Chief Bill Martinez, head of the major crimes division, said hours of surveillance and months of investigation went into dismantling the ring.

According to the complaints: Evans and Williams managed specific victims, but worked together to post ads for sex, provide “protection” and transportation for Johns, and shared gift cards and profit from the trafficking.

Keller, Foster and Cross helped by soliciting girls, renting rooms, providing transportation and posting and paying for sex ads. The three also received profits from the trafficking, the charges said.

The complaints list six victims in the ring — girls and women who, in 2014, were between the ages of 16 and 24. Evans allegedly made the victims call him “Daddy,” while Cross went by the nickname “Mama Sue.” Many of the vic-

tims called Keller “Mom.”

The charges allege that Evans didn’t let his victims go unsupervised except for one who was his “bottom” — a special trusted person who is trafficked less by a pimp. He allegedly made the victims watch movies involving pimps so they could learn rules such as not talking to other men and putting their heads down and keeping silent.

One victim told authorities that Evans trafficked her for a month, during which time she met with about seven Johns a day, making about \$400 to \$500 daily that went to Evans.

“Williams was physically violent toward [one victim], hitting her with a belt for talking to other males, and

punching her in the face,” the charges said. “Evans would control girls working for him by verbal intimidation, hitting them in the legs, and providing drugs.”

In August 2014, Evans, Williams and Cross took three victims to Racine and Milwaukee, Wis., and to Chicago, the charges said. The victims were required to respond to Backpage.com ads and also to “walk the streets.”

“One victim was ultimately dropped at a bus line in Chicago and sent back to Minnesota because she was felt to be ‘too young’ to be on the road,” the charges said

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