

Perverted individuals prey on our youth



From the Director

by Ann Dugger

A few weeks ago when Attorney General Bill McCollum was in town with Governor Crist for a press conference to address the crime issue here, I had the opportunity to talk with him as we walked in a Northwest neighborhood. He spoke about his firm commitment to identify and prosecute cyber criminals who prey on our kids.

One newly created position in Jacksonville has been filled by Pamela Bennett, who recently worked in the Office of the Attorney General as a Specialist in the Division of Victim Services and Criminal Justice Programs. In February she became the Victim Services Program Administrator for the Victim Advocate Division of the Child Predator Cyber Crime Unit.

This Unit is doing very important work to protect our children by investigating and prosecuting any crime against a child facilitated by a computer, the Internet, digital media, cellular phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or any

other electronic device. The investigators, victim advocates, and prosecutors in the Unit are trained in current technologies, tactics, and the law, and share their expertise through educational programs and community awareness efforts.

Cyber crime is a problem of mind-boggling proportions, and abundant Internet services provide the easiest, quickest way for perverts to contact unsuspecting youth. It is virtually impossible to monitor all of them. One such venue, MySpace, a social networking service created in July 2003, is the sixth most popular website in any language, the third most popular in the United States. MySpace population is currently listed at 154 million, and it is rising drastically with rates of about 300,000 new members per day.

Unsuspecting teens (or younger) easily post their pictures and personal information, which predators pounce on and exploit in numerous and devious ways. They may pose as another young girl or boy, post pictures and details to entice the interest of these young kids, and cleverly arrange meetings with no intention but to molest and possibly kill.

National and local law enforcement agencies around the country have CyberCrime units with detectives who

monitor the Internet, frequent chatrooms looking for predators, often themselves posing as a young boy or girl, and arranging meetings where the predator is arrested. But there is no way of knowing how many go undetected.

Most of us have watched in fascination as NBC's *Dateline* "To Catch a Predator" series, working with undercover investigators, has exposed about 200 men looking for sex with 12- or 13-year-old kids. Amazingly, even though most acknowledge having seen the TV series, they come to the setup house at a steady pace, some driving many hours to spend the night with a teen they think is home alone.

Karla Dial, in an article for *Focus on the Family*, writes: "They all had one thing in common: instead of the young girl or boy they were expecting, they met very public shame – a camera crew and *Dateline* reporter Chris Hansen, who invariably asked, 'Why are you here?'"

"Two years, seven cities, six states and 161 [at the time] predators later, viewers still don't have a complete answer to that question; the men caught on tape mostly stumble through their replies, telling Hansen they don't know or they're just there to 'hang out' with a child left alone.

"But family advocates and psychologists say the real reason is

something else the men almost certainly have in common – the use of all types of pornography, which has become so rampant that many people believe it to be both legal and victimless."

Dial goes on to say that neither of those beliefs could be further from the truth. "Obscenity is illegal to produce, sell or transport across state lines, whether it involves children or not; its victims include the children the user encounters on the Internet, the user's family – even the user himself."

She cites Daniel Weiss, Focus on the Family's senior analyst on media and sexuality: "At some point, you get to the end of the line of what you can do with adult hardcore porn. What's left after that? Children, animals, rape."

Mary Anne Layden, PhD, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania who treats child molesters in her practice at the Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program, said that "by the time a man is bold enough to drive to a strange house in the middle of the night where he expects to have sex with a child, he's most likely a habitual porn user who believes 'millions of people on the Internet are doing it,' so it's OK for him as well. And the pornography he habitually views

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This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

-2 Timothy 3:1-5

Faith Corner

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