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JUSTICE COALITION'S
VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Protect your family from sexual predators and offenders



FDLE Regional Director

by Ken Tucker

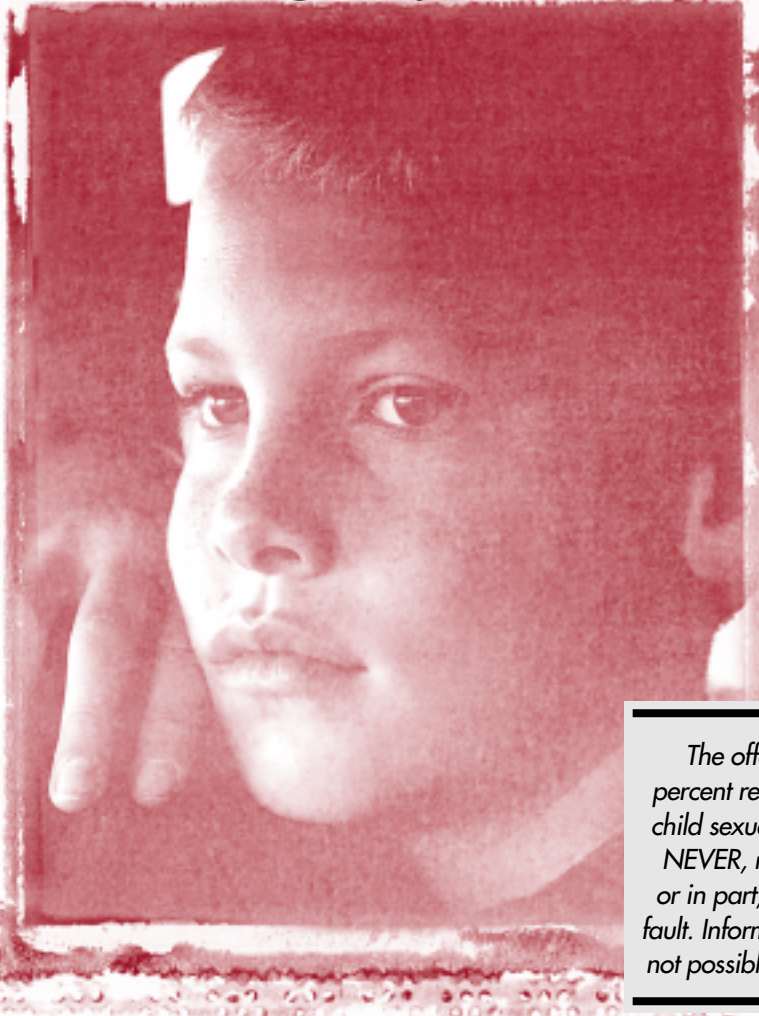
She had been visiting a friend and was taking a short cut home just like thousands of children do every day. Soon everyone in Florida knew that 11-year-old Carlie Brucia had not reached home. An investigation uncovered that she had been kidnapped, raped and murdered. One child who doesn't make it home is one too many.

Sexual predators and offenders know no season, yet as summer arrives and our children have more free time for friends and activities, parental concern for their safety from sexual predators and offenders increases. One reason for increased concern is that sexual predators and offenders are not only strangers but can also be a family friend or even a family member spending increased time with our children. They come from all age groups, job occupations and neighborhoods. They are men and women.

As of December 31, 2003, there were 26,092 sexual offenders and 4,300 sexual predators registered with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Florida requires that all sexual predators and offenders must register their residence address with the state. Residence information and other information about the offending individual is made available on the Internet by going to www.fdle.state.us and accessing the Sexual Predators/Offenders link. This awareness of the residential location of current sexual predators and offenders allows individuals to know if a predator or offender lives in their neighborhood and if so, to protect their children against inappropriate contact with that

Protect your family, page 15

Innocence Betrayed
 The tragedy of child sexual abuse



*Name has been changed

by Shirley Shaw

"Hey, Leah, come over here and let's watch cartoons together," Lester* said as he made himself comfortable on the couch.

A family friend and next-door neighbor, Lester was watching Leah* and her siblings, as well as his own children and stepchildren, while the mothers were at work. He was friendly and playful with all the kids and Leah liked and trusted him, so without a second thought she did as he asked and lay down beside him.

The eight-year-old child had no way of knowing that within the next few minutes an interminable nightmare of horror would begin.

When Lester pinned her legs to the couch with his and began molesting her with his fingers, she cried out in pain and protested that her mother said no one should touch her in that way. He jerked her up and spanked her then resumed his awful actions. He told her, "Nothing has happened. If you tell anyone about this, I will kill your brother and make you watch him die." He said she was just a stupid kid; who would believe her instead

of him?

Seated in my office, tears streaming down her face, Leah looked at me with an anguished expression, her eyes pleading for my understanding. "I was just a little kid; I didn't understand, and I really believed he would kill him."

Before long this warped pervert's molestation progressed to rape, then sodomy and finally oral sex. He would send the other children outside to play,

Innocence betrayed, page 4

The offender is 100 percent responsible for child sexual abuse; it is NEVER, not in whole or in part, the Victim's fault. Informed consent is not possible at that age.

Impact of sexual abuse on children



Answers from Janie

by Janie Simpson, L.C.S.W.

Most people prefer to believe that sexual abuse of children does not happen. Increased publicity about this crime, however, provides undeniable truth that it really does exist. Still, we would prefer to think it won't happen in our community, our neighborhood, our church, our school, or our family.

The truth is, sexual abuse happens to one in three to four females and one in five to seven males. Some experts believe these numbers are too low. Even if sexual abuse only occurred to one out of a hundred children, it would be too frequent. The impact on children is long-

lasting and often continues into adulthood.

How children are affected and how long the effects last depend on the age of the child when the abuse first occurred, how often the abuse happened, how severe was the sexual abuse, and what is the relationship between the victim and the abuser.

Sexual abuse is any sexual experience for a child with an adult or older individual. The nature of sexual abuse can range from fondling to penetration to exposing children to actual sexual behavior or pornography.

The relationship between the child and the abuser is important. The more trusted the abuser's position is to the child, the more confusing for the child. At least 80 percent of abusers are known to child victims.

Research into the impact of sexual abuse of children has shown several consistent effects. These effects are peer

interaction problems, depression, emotional troubles, more aggressive or more socially withdrawn, overly sensitive to others' opinions, lacking appropriate social skills, and exhibiting inappropriate sexual behaviors.

Boys who have been sexually abused tend to become more aggressive, while girl victims are more submissive and withdrawn. Either extreme of behavior leads to difficulty in peer relationships.

Children tend toward depression when they have experienced abuse because they have such a feeling of powerlessness and helplessness. They often feel as if they are to blame for the abuse. Abusers like to foster that feeling so they won't feel so responsible. Children feel they are to blame because they like the attention or the "special" treatment they receive from the abuser.

The sexually acting out behavior is the most disturbing to the adult caregivers.

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