

Forewarned is Forearmed

Making a Difference with Involvement and Information

- Tell your children you love them so they will not seek affection or attention elsewhere. Show your children you love them by being positively involved in their lives.
- Set aside time to talk to your children. Be aware of where your children are and what they are doing. Know your children's social contacts, their age and older. Know who they consider friends. Know what contacts they are making in the community and on the Internet.
- Know the registered sexual predators and sexual offenders in your neighborhood. Utilize the information for knowledge about your surroundings and people, not to instill unwarranted fear.
- Meet your neighbors and introduce them to your children while you are with them. Make it a point to get to know who new neighbors are.
- Make certain that there are backup people your children can contact if they need assistance and you can't be reached.
- Teach your children what tricks are used to entice children. Predators and offenders are good at the art of intimidation. They will also attempt to befriend your child and win their confidence. Family members or friends intent on harming your child often do this best. Children should be aware of the dangers of accepting a ride from someone they don't know or approaching their vehicle.
- Instruct your children what to do if someone trying to abduct them grabs them. Discuss what "abduct" means. Instruct them to yell, scream, kick, scratch, bite, fall to the ground or anything to draw attention from bystanders.
- Encourage your children to use the buddy system. Teach them to avoid deserted parks, woods, parking lots, alleys or even schoolyards late after school.
- Work out an acceptable route to school and other places they often go. Have them stick with this route. Instruct them to never take shortcuts.
- Tell your children what to do if you are separated from them while shopping or at a public place.
- Create opportunities to practice "what if" for a variety of dangerous situations.
- Monitor your children's computer use. They are still your children even though they may protest.
- Become familiar with the different communications software used by your child, such as e-mail, instant messaging, phone text messaging and internet chat rooms, My Space, etc. Have your child demonstrate how he/she accesses sites.
- Tell your children that when on a computer to never give out personal information, never send a photograph or any other item via the Internet without parental permission, never respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable and never agree to get together or meet anyone they meet on-line. This is especially important when involved with older children.
- Discuss sexual predators and offenders with your children at a level appropriate for their age. Speak openly about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is never discussed.
- Teach your children that no one has the right to touch them in a way that is painful, uncomfortable, upsetting or confusing to them, not even a friend or a family member.
- Keep current files on your children, including a recent photo, physical description, extra activities and friends' names, addresses and phone numbers. You will need this information to help locate them should they go missing.

Sex Offenders...

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

sexual abuse every year. In about 90 percent of sexual abuse cases involving children, the perpetrator is someone the child knows and trusts. Unfortunately, sexual abuse frequently goes unreported when the offender is a family member or friend. It is up to us to report sexual offenses, no matter whether by a stranger, family member or friend. Sex offenders usually re-offend. Reporting one incident will very likely protect the victim and other children from future abuse.

Find out if your neighbors are sex offenders. This information is readily available on FDLE's "Sexual Offender Database" at this URL: <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender>.

Click on the "Offender Search" link at the top of the page. The displayed screen provides three types of search. The "Offender Search" lets you search a person's name to determine if he/she is a sex offender/predator. It also allows you to obtain all registered sex offenders/predators by Florida county or a specific zip code.

The "Neighborhood Search" allows you to locate sexual offenders/predators living within a certain mile radius of your home or of any other entered address: school, church, friend's home.

A third search available on the "Sexual Offender Database" web site is the "E-Mail/IM Search" tool. This search allows you to see if an email address or instant message name belongs to a registered sexual offender or predator. This is an important tool, especially if your children spend time on sites where they can easily meet others.

To perform this search display the Sex Offender Database as described above, then click on the "Offender Search" button. On the displayed screen, click on the "Begin Search" button to the right of "E-Mail/IM Search." The displayed screen allows you to search either e-mail or Instant Message names.

Keep in mind that a negative result does not guarantee that an e-mail or IM name is not being used by a sexual offender/predator. You must also keep informed about Internet threats to your children. To keep informed we must personally monitor our children's use of the Internet. We have a right and responsibility as parents to know in detail where our children go on the Internet and with whom they communicate.

Know when sexual offenders/predators move near you. Through the "Offender Alert System" you can receive e-mails when a sexual offender/predator moves into your neighborhood or any address you wish to monitor (home, school, daycare, workplace, etc.). You may also enter the

name of a sexual offender/predator and receive an e-mail should that person change addresses.

To subscribe to this service, display the "Sexual Offender Database" as described above. Click on the "Offender Alert" button at the top of the screen. Click on "New User?" and follow the prompts to set up an account. Click on "Offender Alert HELP" for detailed instructions on setting up an account.

Help law enforcement locate wanted sex offenders. Sexual offenders and predators are required to regularly report in person to their county sheriff's office to register and confirm their current address. If law enforcement discovers that offenders/predators are not living at their last reported address, a warrant is issued for their arrest and they are listed as "absconded." Such "absconders" can live anonymously in any city in Florida or move to other states unnoticed.

We can make a difference and help law enforcement locate absconders by checking for them in our area. To perform this search on-line, display

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the Sex Offender Database as described above, then click on the "Offender Search" button. Next to the label "Offender Search" select "Standard." On the screen displayed, under "Advanced Options," clear all the status check-marks except for "Absconded." Return to the top of the screen and enter a city or county name and click on "Search." Photographs of the absconders from your

search area will appear. If you recognize any of them and know where they may be residing, call law enforcement.

FDLE has partnered with local television station FOX 30 to feature absconders every Wednesday during the 10:00 p.m. newscast. The news segment titled "Offender Alert" features different absconders each week and asks for the public's help in locating them. Watch the program. Call law enforcement if you know the location of one of the absconders featured.

Continue to learn more how you can protect your child. For additional information on protecting your child take the time to review "Making a Difference with Involvement and Information" tips in this issue of the *Victims' Advocate*. Share this information with your children and friends. Discussing and learning the guidelines may literally save a child's life one day. Remember sex offenders/predators blend into the community. You don't see the monster within them.

Ann Dugger, Justice Coalition's Executive Director, cited one of Ted Hires' favorite quotations, "Together we can, together we will, make a difference." FDLE encourages each of us to make that difference as it relates to sexual offenders and predators and our children's safety.

We Need Your Help



Clay County Sheriff's Office detectives continue their investigation into the violent murder of 54-year-old Mark Gregg of Green Cove Springs.

The married, disabled man was alone at his home when the suspect entered and killed him in broad daylight April 18.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to contact Clay County Robbery/Homicide Section at (904)213-6620 or (904)264-6512. Or call CrimeStoppers at (866)845-8477; you may receive a cash reward for information that results in an arrest.

Nick Schmitt, 22, remains in critical condition after a road-rage fight between the occupants of two vehicles early on Friday morning, April 17, according to the Jacksonville Beach Police Department. He and a friend (driving a Hyundai Tiburon) and a Chevrolet pickup were traveling southbound on State Road A1A about 2:15 a.m. when there was an encounter between the drivers. Both pulled over

in the 300 block of Osceola Avenue and began to fight. Schmitt was knocked to the ground and fractured his skull when he hit the pavement.

The JBPD is looking for the driver and the other vehicle, believed to be a black extended-cab pickup. They believe three men were in the truck. If you have information about this incident or this vehicle, please call JBPD at (904)270-1667.