

Federal, local agencies target child sex trafficking in Oregon

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

A coalition of federal and local law enforcement agencies in Oregon targeted those who sexually exploit children through human trafficking as part of a nationwide crackdown this past weekend. During an overnight sting operation Thursday, February 19, 2009, dozens of agents, officers and deputies worked to rescue child victims of sex crimes while identifying the adults involved in the trafficking. Both enforcement actions are aimed at disrupting the cycle of victimization by getting the children off the streets and at developing sufficient evidence to bring charges against the adults who are profiting from the sale of children this way.

All totaled, the law enforcement partners picked up seven underage girls and six adult "pimps" at four sites throughout the metro area. The location of the sites will not be disclosed due to on-going investigative efforts. The Oregon Department of Human Services started protective service assessments and is working to provide each child with necessary services. Officers and deputies from various local agencies took custody of the pimps, charging them with a variety of crimes. They also cited 14 adult female prostitutes and arrested three "johns" or other adult associates caught in the sting.

"It is difficult to imagine a crime more depraved than selling our children on the street for sex," said David Ian Miller, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Oregon. "By working together with other law enforcement and social service agencies throughout the region, we have a chance to make a difference in these girls' lives and in the quality of the community in which we live."

This enforcement action was coordinated with other such efforts at FBI offices throughout the United States as part of Operation Cross Country III starting on Thursday and going through the weekend. Operation Cross Country I and II, both of which happened in 2008, led to hundreds of arrests and the rescue of dozens of children throughout the nation. This is the first time that the Portland-metropolitan area has taken part in an Operation Cross Country initiative.

As in the previous cases, these operations were the result of work by the Innocence Lost Initiative, a program now located in more than 30 FBI offices nationwide. The Portland FBI just received its approval to join the Innocence Lost National Initiative. The Innocence Lost Initiative is designed to target criminal enterprises involved in the domestic sex trafficking of children. This program brings state and federal law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and social services providers together with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to address the problem.

Law enforcement agencies taking part in Operation Cross Country III in the Portland-metro area include: the FBI, Portland Division; Portland Police Bureau; Hillsboro Police Department; Beaverton Police Department; Tualatin Police Department; Tigard Police Department; Eugene Police Department; Corvallis Police Department; the Washington County Sheriff's Office; the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office; the Lane County Parole and Probation Office; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Victim assistance professionals, therapists, and/or child protective service caseworkers from the following agencies provided services to the children: FBI; Portland Police Bureau; Clackamas County District Attorney's Office; the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office; the Sexual Assault Resource Center; Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas Counties; Lifeworks Northwest; Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (Juvenile Services Division); and Janus Youth Programs. This effort was coordinated with the U.S. Attorney's Office in conjunction with the Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force.

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