MySpace sued by families whose daughters were assaulted

by Bend Weekly News Sources

MySpace Inc., and its parent company, News Corp., have been sued in California state court by four families who allege that their minor daughters were solicited online and then sexually abused by adult MySpace users, according to the law firms representing the families.

Families from New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina filed separate suits Wednesday in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleging negligence, recklessness, fraud, and negligent misrepresentation by the companies. The families are represented by the law firms of Barry & Loewy LLP, of Austin, Tex., and Arnold & Itkin LLP, of Houston.

The plaintiffs include:

-- A 15-year-old Pennsylvania girl, "Julie Doe II," who was lured to a meeting by an adult MySpace user, kidnapped, and sexually assaulted in 2006. The adult MySpace user is awaiting trial on 12 charges of unlawful sexual conduct with a minor. (The cause number is SC092421.) -- A 15-year-old Texas girl, "Julie Doe III," who was lured to a meeting, drugged and assaulted in 2006 by an adult MySpace user. Houston police officers and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents located the girl. The adult MySpace user later pled guilty to sexual assault and is serving a 10-year sentence in a Texas pennitentiary. (The cause number is SC092423.) -- A 14-year-old New York girl, "Julie Doe IV," was lured to a meeting by an adult MySpace user, severely intoxicated with alcohol and illicit drugs forced upon her, and then sexually assaulted by the adult MySpace user and his adult friend. The men later were charged with felony sexual assault and/or felony rape by New York authorities. The friend of the adult MySpace user pled guilty and is now in a New York penitentiary. The adult MySpace user is awaiting trial. (The cause number is SC092424.) -- Two South Carolina sisters, 14-year-old "Julie Doe V" and 15-year-old "Julie Doe VI," who were lured to a meeting, severely intoxicated by alcohol and illicit drugs, and sexually assaulted and raped by two adult MySpace users. Both men were arrested by South Carolina authorities and are awaiting criminal prosecution. (The cause number is SC092422.)Attorney Jason A. Itkin, of Arnold & Itkin LLP, stated, "Like state attorneys general throughout the nation, we believe that more must be done to ensure that social networking sites are made safer. In our view, MySpace waited entirely too long to attempt to institute meaningful security measures that effectively increase the safety of their underage users."

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Attorney Adam J. Loewy, of Barry & Loewy LLP, stated, "Families are the first line of defense for children, but these cases show the practical realities of social networking sites. Blaming the families of abuse victims who were solicited online, as some have done, is a cynical excuse that ignores the fact that social networking sites can lead to heinous abuse by Internet predators. It is now clear that MySpace recognizes that serious security problems exist."

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