

Area Arrests for Internet Related Sex Crimes Harsh Reminder of Cyber Dangers

by K_Guice

Authorities Offer Advice for Protecting Kids Online

Three area arrests, one including a high school teacher, serves as a wake up call to parents that predators are not only lurking on the Internet, but also in their own backyards.

June 13, a Redmond man was arrested at his place of business on sex abuse and attempted rape charges. "The incident was reported to us by a 17-year-old female," said Detective Shelley Prince. James Ronald Stipe, 52, reportedly met the girl through an online dating site called Cupid.com.

Stipe, the owner of Stipe Engine Specialties, was taken into custody at the business. Computers were then seized in raids at both his business and northeast Redmond home.

Cupid.com requires that members be 18 years of age or older. Police Detective Prince acknowledged that that was the case. "The site requires that you are supposed to be over 18 and she did say she was over 18," Detective Prince said. "That is the only way you can get on it."

Stipe was booked on charges of third-degree sex abuse, second-degree attempted sex abuse and first-degree attempted rape. "His bail was set at \$15,000 with 10 percent required," Detective Prince said. Stipe posted bond and was released pending a July 7 court date.

Stipe is only one of the latest in a series of arrests where adults were allegedly contacting minors online.

Another case under investigation involves a Redmond High School teacher. May 31, Christopher Frederick Smith, 49, was arrested in his Eagle Crest home on charges that he used the Internet to entice a minor for sex.

"This was an undercover case in which one of our FBI agents was acting as a young girl," said Beth Anne Steele with the FBI. Over the course of two months, an undercover Innocent Images Task Force Agent held multiple conversations with a person identifying himself with the Yahoo! screen name of "daddyforyoubend."

Steele said investigators were then able to determine that the IP address used by "daddyforyoubend" was registered to Smith.

Another Oregon case that made headlines involves a Hubbard man who was arrested for allegedly arranging to meet two high school girls at a LaPine motel that he had met and chatted with on MySpace.com. When he went to court last month, he was reportedly arrested on additional charges involving a Tillamook County

victim.

The recent cases are not isolated incidents. Steele says since the formation of the Oregon task force a couple of years ago, there have been several dozen arrests.

At any one time, the FBI's Innocent Images National Initiative, which began in 1995, has more than 2,400 active child sexual exploitation cases open.

According to the FBI, each year, one in five children ages 10-17 receives a sexual solicitation over the Internet. One in three children is threatened online by predators or bullies.

Of middle school students surveyed, 85 percent spent at least one hour a week on the Internet. Of those, 60 percent received messages from strangers, and two-thirds of those who did, responded.

Steele says it's crucial that parents and their children get informed. "We have a whole brochure related to that on our website and I would recommend parents look at that," she said.

Some of the tips include:

- Communicate, and talk to your child about sexual victimization and potential online danger.
- Spend time with your children online. Have them teach you about their favorite online destinations.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a computer-sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or another member of the household.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software. While parents should utilize these mechanisms, they should not totally rely on them.
- Always maintain access to your child's online account and randomly check his/her e-mail.

Anyone who suspects an online predator can report it to the FBI's Portland office at 503-224-4181. The Parent's Guide to Internet Safety booklet can be found at the FBI's website: www.FBI.gov.

Bend Weekly Newslink: <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguide.htm>

James Ronald Stipe

Photo Credit: Deschutes County Jail

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