



By Tamas Mondovics

HCSO Internet Predator Unit Makes Child Pornography Arrests, Reveals Ongoing Problem



Children as young as five years old are sexually exploited and victimized by predators who use the internet as the forum to obtain and distribute child pornography. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Internet Predator Unit is working hard to stop the crime and arrest those that support the ever growing crime.

While child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children is not new and is a sad part of today's society, what many people may not know is that the average age of sexually abused children is five.

Thus, the huge amount of time and effort that goes into the investigation and subsequent arrest of sexual predators put forth daily by dedicated detectives and local law enforcement personnel should not be a surprise.

"The sexual exploitation of a child is a

During the month-long investigation, detectives served search warrants at the homes of the two men, where computer equipment containing pornographic images, random photographs of male and female children obtained over the internet, were seized, detectives said.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, producing child abuse images has become easy and inexpensive.

"The internet allows images and digitized movies to be reproduced and disseminated to tens of thousands of individuals at the click of a button, while the distribution and receipt of such images can be done almost anonymously," Dubord said.

As a result, child pornography is readily available through virtually every internet technology (Websites, e-mail, instant messaging, internet Relay Chat, newsgroups/bulletin boards and peer-to-peer.

According to the IPU, detectives track between 20-30 online child pornography activities within the Tampa Bay area on any given day.

"Anyone looking at child pornography supports the crime, but our investigation is much more than just searching for someone stumbling on some images while browsing the Web," Dubord said. "We look for intent, time and behavioral aspects, which includes those that mistakenly think that by downloading and erasing files keeps them under the radar."

Other suspects recently arrested for possession of child pornography (100 counts) includes Jay Goldstein, of Lutz, whose computer equipment revealed numerous images and video files depicting children from approximately 12 years old and younger engaging in sexual activities such as oral sex and sexual intercourse, deputies said.

The HCSO also released the arrests of Stonebridge Trl. in River Hills residents,

Elizabeth Wirick, 45, and Richard James Piccoli, 58, for use of a child in sexual performance and possession of child pornography.

According to HCSO, in several images of the victim, who is under the age of 12, is posed next to the defendant while involved with and exposed to sexual activity.

On January 13, detectives with the HCSO, Internet Sexual Predator Unit executed a search warrant at the residence of Lloyd Lee Edge, 4728 Iowa Ave. in Tampa.

While inside the home, detectives located and seized numerous computer items that were later examined by forensic computer experts.

During the examination of the computer equipment, detectives found files depicting children approximately 12 years old and younger engaged in sexual activities. Edge was also in possession of child pornography files that he made available for distribution.

On January 24, Edge, a 20-year United States Air Force veteran who currently works for the Postal Service, was arrested at his home and booked into the Hillsborough County Jail.

Dubord emphasized that the technological ease, lack of expense and perceived anonymity in obtaining and distributing child pornography has resulted in an explosion in the availability, accessibility, and volume of child pornography, but vowed that the effort to stop this crime and to protect the children will not end.

"We will continue combating this nationwide growing epidemic by arresting those individuals in Hillsborough County found with images that depict children engaged in sexually explicit activity," he said. "We will not stop."

For more information about the HCSO's special units, please visit www.hcso.tampa.fl.us/About-HCSO.