

*United States Attorney's Office  
Northern District of Iowa*



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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT JOIN IN  
“PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD”**

***Enforcement and Education Key to Protecting Children  
from Predators on the Internet***

Northern District of Iowa United States Attorney Charles W. Larson, Sr.; Linn County Attorney Harold Denton; Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation Director Steven Bogle and Assistant Director John Quinn; Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Coordinator Michael Morris; Marion Police Chief Harry Daugherty; Cedar Rapids Assistant Police Chief Dave Johnson; United States Postal Inspector Troy Raper; and Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Travis Yarbrough held a press conference today at the Cedar Rapids Public Library to discuss the United States Department of Justice's "Project Safe Childhood" and to mark the first anniversary of the opening of the ICAC Task Force's forensic laboratory in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Larson began the press conference stating: "We are here today to discuss a very serious problem: the use of the Internet to sexually victimize children. With children being home for the holidays and having an increased opportunity for unsupervised Internet access, it is especially important that parents know what their children are doing online. That is true at home, in school, and in public places such as the library where we are today."

To address the problem of Internet crimes against children, the United States Department of Justice has established Project Safe Childhood (PSC). The PSC law enforcement initiative was announced by United States Attorney General Alberto Gonzales in February 2006. PSC is a nationwide initiative aimed at preventing the abuse and exploitation of children through the Internet.

Larson stated: "I have just returned from Washington where 96 United States Attorneys and hundreds of federal, state, and local investigators and prosecutors met for the first Project Safe Childhood conference. Attorney General Gonzales spoke for all of us when he stated that 'everyone here in this room today and [our] colleagues back home [must] join together in building a foundation for a national, zero-tolerance attitude towards pedophiles and sexual predators.'"

PSC contains two key components. The first is cooperative law enforcement. PSC calls for federal, state, and local prosecutors and investigators to work together to swiftly prosecute those who harm children. The second component of PSC is education. "Parents and children must be made aware of the dangers lurking on the Internet and must be taught how to avoid becoming a victim of a sexual predator," said Larson.

As noted by Attorney General Gonzales "We can't communicate too much when it comes to investigating and prosecuting these crimes. We can't have too many partnerships or too much help from everyday citizens when it comes to protecting our kids."

Larson explained that cooperative law enforcement is and has been a big part of Iowa's plan against Internet predators. "Postal Inspectors and FBI agents now routinely work with state and local agencies to investigate Internet crimes. In the last two years 25 federal defendants have been sentenced in Northern Iowa to a total of more than 166 years in prison. These cases were the result of cooperative law enforcement," he said.

Larson pointed to the investigation and prosecution of Marion, Iowa, resident David Starr, 44, as an excellent example of cooperative law enforcement efforts. Starr met 16- and 17-year-old girls over the Internet and persuaded them to take and send to him sexually explicit pictures and videos of themselves. Two of the girls were from Arizona, one was from Illinois, and one was from New York. Starr spent hours communicating with his victims either online or on the telephone. When agents searched Starr's home and office, they found scores of printed website profiles of minors and young women.

The investigation of Starr was conducted by the Marion Police Department, the FBI and the United States Postal Inspection Service. A jury convicted Starr on three counts of production of child pornography and other Internet related charges. Starr now faces over 100 years in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of at least 15 years.

"It is cooperative efforts like these that are already making a difference in this country," Larson said. "With Internet predator prosecutions up, studies indicate there has been a reduction in online solicitation of children. Even so, we must and will continue to relentlessly find and prosecute Internet predators."

ICAC Task Force Coordinator Morris spoke about the Iowa Internet Crime Against Children Task Force's efforts fighting Internet predators: "We opened our ICAC forensic lab in Cedar Rapids just over a year ago and hit the ground running. We have assisted 54 agencies in approximately 110 Internet-related investigations." Examples of these cases include:

- Casey Frederiksen – a federal prosecution on receipt and possession of child pornography charges in which the defendant received a sentence of 14 years' imprisonment

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- Jonathan Shub – a federal prosecution in which the defendant was convicted of traveling from Illinois to Iowa to have sex with a 12-year-old he met on the Internet. Shub received a sentence of 10 years' imprisonment

Morris noted that, despite such successes, "We cannot arrest our way out of this problem. Our children can only be protected when vigorous law enforcement efforts are complemented by public awareness and education efforts." To date, the ICAC has trained 65 people to make Internet Safety presentations to student and parent groups across the state of Iowa. Morris promised to facilitate such presentations to any requesting school, PTA, club, or church or other faith-based organization. Requests for presentations should be directed to Victim/Witness Coordinator Shari Konarske at the United States Attorney's Office (877-398-2842). Morris also noted the websites of [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org), [www.netsmartz.org/education](http://www.netsmartz.org/education), and [www.netsmartzkids.org](http://www.netsmartzkids.org) have valuable information for children, parents, and educators.

Postal Inspector Troy Raper also announced the Postal Inspection Service's national education campaign to educate children about safe Internet usage. "2 SMRT 4U" urges kids to post safely and provides online information to help them stay safe. Actress Hayden Panetierre of the television series "Heroes" is the public face of the Postal Inspection Service campaign. Ms. Panetierre has appeared in public awareness advertisements wearing a ring emphasizing the importance of safe Internet practices. Teens can receive a free ring like the one worn by Ms. Panetierre by visiting [www.2smrt4u.com](http://www.2smrt4u.com). "We hope kids will wear these rings to remind themselves and their friends to stay safe online," Raper said.

Larson emphasized the need to protect children using the Internet by working together at the local, state, and federal levels to prosecute Internet offenders and to educate children and parents about Internet dangers. "It takes all of us working together to keep your child from becoming an Internet victim," Larson concluded.