



Department of Justice

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SARASOTA MAN GUILTY OF ONLINE INDUCEMENT OF A MINOR FOR SEX

Tampa, Florida - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that a federal jury today found Timothy Scott Bidwell (48, of Sarasota) guilty of using the internet in an attempt to induce and persuade a minor to engage in sex acts with him. Bidwell faces a maximum penalty of life in federal prison. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 6, 2011.

Bidwell was indicted on September 21, 2010. According to evidence presented at trial, Bidwell posted an ad on an internet website soliciting a mother who was willing to share her daughter for sex. For two days, Bidwell communicated online via email and instant chat messages with an undercover detective, who Bidwell believed to be a mother willing to allow him to have sex with her eleven and fourteen year old daughters. In these communications, Bidwell repeatedly described, in graphic detail, the sex acts he wished to perform with the children. He was arrested by authorities on August 24, 2010, when he traveled from Sarasota to Clearwater to meet, who he believed to be, the mother and daughters to engage in the sexual activity.

This case was investigated by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Amanda C. Kaiser and Josephine W. Thomas.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

This case was part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to identify, investigate, and arrest those who prey on children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign-national predators whose crimes make them deportable. ICE encourages the public to report suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-347-2423. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.