



Newport News Sheriff's Office

224 26th Street; Newport News, VA 23607 • 757.926.8535 • fax: 757.926.8429



MEDIA RELEASE

Contact:
Kathleen Carey, PIO
Newport News Sheriff's Office
Office: 757.926.8747
Cell: 757.813.6139
E-mail: kcarey@nngov.com

FOR RELEASE: **Immediate**

DATE: **July 23, 2007**

Safety. Awareness. Protection from Sexual Predators.

by

Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO

A former Navy man pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court on Friday July 20, 2007 to charges of trying to meet more than 100 children online for sex. Timothy Fugit of Newport News, Virginia was found with hundreds of pornographic films featuring children on his computer.

A 25-year old Hampton man, known as "Bishop Jay," was charged July 10, 2007 with aggravated sexual battery against a Newport News boy. Jermaine Lynes met his teenaged victim at a local church when the boy sought help from the spiritual counselor.

Stories like these are appearing more frequently in local newspapers and on TV.

Alarmed by the harm that can come to children and to adult victims of sexual assault, the Newport News Sheriff's Office (NNSO) is helping notify the community of sex offenders moving into neighborhoods.

Users of the NNSO website can link to the most comprehensive sex offender database available to the public. It uses software specializing in community notification. It is not enough to simply list the name of a registered sex offender. Citizens can literally map how close the potentially dangerous offender is to their home or any other address they wish. In addition to a name and address, the registered sex offender's photograph appears.

"This in no way gives anyone the power to threaten or harm the offender," emphasized Sheriff Gabe Morgan. "If a person were to somehow retaliate against the offender, they themselves will have broken the law." Instead, it is awareness that provides safety from sexual predators.

Morgan went on to say, "You can show your children the person's picture and tell them not to talk to him or her. You can show your babysitter, a grandparent, a neighbor the information. Knowledge is power."

Users of Offender Watch can type in an address and up pops a map showing the location of each registered sex offender within a one mile radius. There's no limit to the number of addresses that can be checked. Look to see who's living near your home, church, school, or caregiver's address. And there is no need to keep rechecking to see if additional offenders have moved into your neighborhood. The Newport News Sheriff's Office e-mails enrolled users in the event an offender registers within that one mile radius of their address.

There are 69 square miles in Newport News. Within the city borders are 292 registered sex offenders. The Newport News Sheriff's Office launched Offender Watch in April of 2006. Since that date, nearly 2,000 emails have been sent to citizens of Newport News.

Watch Systems is the company that developed the Offender Watch software. They keep a weekly report showing numbers that measure usage. Rose Richardson recently explained that the NNSO must be doing a good job educating the public because of all the Virginia agencies they contract with, Newport News shows the most percent saturation of households.

For a closer look, go to www.nnsheriff.org and click on Offender Watch.

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