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News

Sunday, February 19, 2006

Expert: No one safe from predators

By John Ford / Daily News Associate Editor
Published: Friday, February 17, 2006 1:33 PM CST
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Think you and your loved ones are safe from predators online?

Better think again.

That was the

message Jim Murray, a former

chief with the Diamond Police Department turned electronic sleuth, was bringing during a town hall style meeting Thursday at the Neosho High School Auditorium.

For the last several years, Murray has made it his mission to capture on-line predators and bring them to



Jim Murray, a detective with the Diamond Police Department and former police chief, tells of some of the dangers lurking on-line. DAILY NEWS / JOHN FORD

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justice. Since beginning this work, many have been sentenced and more are still pending in the court system.

"Say someone calls you on the phone tonight and says 'I don't like you, you're ugly, you're mean. I'm going to get a gun and shoot your brains out,'" Murray told the group. "Then tomorrow, you go to the door, and someone you have never met before stands there with a gun in his hands, he can be charged with attempted murder.

"What we do is charge these guys with attempted statutory rape, attempted sodomy. If they expose themselves, then we can charge them with child pornography, exposing a child to pornography."

Using one of three screen aliases, Murray logs onto Internet chat rooms. Within moments, his character is being "hit on" by men trolling the net to talk to a young girl. Many want something more.

Talking to a predator

Consider the text from a 2002 Internet chat Murray had with a St. Joseph, Mo., man, Naveed "Ed" Mughal, a native of Pakistan. The following conversation took place after Murray had identified himself as a 13-year-old Diamond girl.

Aliangle: do you like sex?

CindyLu1988: I have never had sex Š but I am looking forward to it.

Aliangle: I can give you some o--- s--. Can you meet me there if I come to diamond, I am going to Joplin this Monday. I can spend Monday night or evening there

CindyLu1988: I could email you and let you know about Monday Š ok?

Aliangle: I can s--- your n----- and I can kiss your b--
-.



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CindyLu1988: wowwww where would we stay? In a motel?

Aliangle: in a motel.

The man proceeded to ask the person he thought was a 13-year-old if she had ever had sex, and she said this would be her first time.

In an instant messenger conversation, Mughal promised he would buy the girl a cell phone: "I have my own business I can afford it," he wrote. He told the girl he wanted to live with her forever "after you turn 18" and then said he could buy her a car. Before confirming their date for 3:30 p.m. Aug. 12, 2002, at the Diamond High School flag pole, Mughal offered to bring champagne.

Ed says: I am little worry if someone will see us together.

Cindy says: Why don't you honk your horn a couple of times and I will come to your car

Ed says: but if a cop is hidden there Š lol?

Cindy says: this town has some dummies for cops! lol

But Murray had the last laugh, so to speak. Instead of a 13-year-old girl, Mughal was met by members of the Diamond Police Department and was arrested by Murray without incident. He entered a guilty plea in early 2003 of attempted statutory rape and attempted statutory sodomy and deported back to Pakistan.

Entrapment?

Some may say the methods employed by investigators such as Murray are entrapment. But the detective begs to differ.

"Missouri state statutes say law enforcement officers can 'masquerade' as a young person," Murray said.

In all of the chat situations, the men initiate sexual conversations often within moments of first meeting a

"teen" on-line.

In one conversation, a Michigan man, David Bullock, allegedly asked one of Murray's "personas" what size bra she wore. Perplexed as to what to tell him, Murray asked his wife, who made a suggestion. The detective recalled what happened next.

" 'I like them smaller than that,' " Murray remembers the man saying. " 'Could you bring a younger friend, maybe a 6- or 8-year-old?'

"Folks, we're not out there trying to entrap these people, we're out there to defend our kids," Murray added.

Again, instead of meeting a 13-year-old girl, Bullock met police officers. In December 2003, a Jasper County jury found him guilty of attempted first degree statutory rape and attempted sexual exploitation of a minor and sentenced him to 14 years in prison, seven for each count, the maximum allowed.

Re-offenders

According to a study conducted by the United States Department of Justice, within three years of their release, 5.3 percent of sex offenders - men who had committed rape or sexual assault - were re-arrested for another sex crime.

One local case like this is that of Donal Wadsworth, a 46-year-old Bentonville, Ark., man who was convicted late last year on seven charges of child enticement and sentenced on Dec. 2 to two years in prison on two of the charges and a \$5,000 fine for the remainder of charges.

Wadsworth appealed the sentence, and posted an appeal bond. Murray said less than two months later, he was again arrested on sexual abuse charges, this time in Fayetteville, Ark.

Wadsworth allegedly agreed to meet someone he thought was a 13-year-old girl at a park on Gregg St.

in Fayetteville in the early morning hours of Jan. 27.

"In his vehicle were ropes, a knife, several maps and a pair of binoculars," Murray told the crowd. "It's an addiction, it's sick. It's how they get their highs and we can never understand it."

Tips for parents

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

Murray, a former public school teacher, offered several tips to help parents "train up" their children to be safe on the Internet. Among these:

- € Keep the computer in an open space where you can see what your child is doing;
- € Surf with your child and meet his/her on-line friends;
- € Explore setting up blockers to prevent sexually oriented e-mails and "spam" from reaching your child's computer;
- € Set appropriate limits regarding the amount of time your child spends on-line.

"A catalog for pedophiles"

The investigator said parents should also set some ground rules on Internet usage. Among these is not posting pictures on blogs or send images to people you do not personally know over the Internet.

Many teens set up blogs containing personality profiles on sites such as MySpace.com. Other popular blog sites include Xanga.com, livejournal.com, hi5.com, facebook.com, blogspot.com and msnspaces.com.

"MySpace, folks, is a catalog for pedophiles" Murray said. "One of my 'girls' belongs to MySpace. Some of the pictures that are posted, well, they are asking for trouble. They're not using good, sound judgment."

At Neosho High School, counselor Rob Lundien estimates, about 150 students have blogs, although students themselves say the number is much higher: between 200 and 300.

The investigator also warned parents not to give out personal information on-line, not to give out or share passwords, not to open e-mail attachments, and not to agree to meet someone they met on-line unless it was in a public place and with one or both parents along.

Warning signs

Murray also told parents what to watch for to determine if their children may be conversing with an on-line predator. Among these:

€ Spending an excessive amount of time on-line, particularly at night;

€ The child is receiving gifts from people you do not know;

€ The child turns off the computer or its monitor when you enter the room;

€ The child becomes withdrawn from the family;

€ The child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.

Murray encouraged parents to check into their child's on-line activities. He said parents should search their child's computer for JPEG images, should enable instant message board archives, enable "cookies" which will tell them what web sites the child is viewing, and check the computer's history.

After the presentation, Murray opened up the floor for a brief question and answer session.

Comments

Comments are limited to 200 words or less.

Helen wrote on February 18, 2006 9:55 AM:

"Thanks John for this article, its very nice and informative. Many Parents need this information..
<http://www.kidsneedprotection.com/> knp.org Kids Our Most Precious Gift! Kids Need Protection! "

Jim wrote on February 17, 2006 7:42 PM:

"Thanks, John for an excellent article. Many parents will now be aware of Internet safety."

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