

This is a free ebook. Please feel free to give it away to friends, parents, educators, and anyone else you might know who has an interest in keeping children safe on the Internet. The only thing I ask is that you not change this book in any way.

## Parents! What are your kids doing online?

Parents! Do you know what your children are doing online? Do you really know? When your son or daughter says they are doing homework on the computer, are they in an area where this can be verified? Or are they locked away in their bedroom, using the computer to do who knows what?

Millions of Americans were riveted to their television screens during the series "To Catch a Predator" that Dateline NBC aired showing dozens of predators who were attempting to meet up with people they thought were teenagers. In most of the cases, the men caught on tape on Dateline NBC thought they were going to the home of a 13 year old whose parents were out of town. 13 years old!!

These people were folks from every walk of life. There was a teacher, a rabbi (!), a bus driver. What was really shocking was that many of these folks already were working with children in their jobs every day.

YouTube ran a spot that showed what a chatroom would look like if the people involved were actually in a room together. You might wonder "what is that 50-something, married bald man doing

talking to the 14 year old girl?" Of course he told the girl that he was 15. And who is the 'Psycho' guy who's obviously mad at the world and everyone in it? And who are those two single guys over in the corner having a private conversation?

Except for the twist at the end, this YouTube spot was pretty true to life about what chatrooms are like and the type of people who frequent them.

Chatrooms are extremely popular among teens and young adults. Chatrooms are also targeted by predators trying to get with these kids for sex. This was obvious in To Catch a Predator and is inferred in the YouTube spot I mentioned. Social networking sites are also common among the young.

MySpace has been in the news lately because of the predators on that site looking for young people to victimize. MySpace and Facebook are the two top sites known as 'networking' sites for people to make friends. However, because of the relative 'anonymity' of the Internet, these are places that predators frequent looking for children to victimize. Many parents are wary of letting their children have a MySpace account at all; however, quite a few teachers and school personnel are reporting that kids as young as 5th grade claim to have profiles on MySpace.

On a forum that I like to frequent (which has a large number of users who are parents), one of the posters reported that some strange words had come up during searches. Words like "sex", "boobs", etc. This poster has several children; among them a son who is 11. However, shockingly

enough, it wasn't the 11 year old who had been searching for these terms online. It was her six year old and his friends!! Six years old!! Now, I know kids will be curious and boys will give in to their curiosities. This is a normal part of growing up. But if I were the parent, I'd want my child's curiosities NOT abused by an online predator, looking to make a victim out of my kid.

What can parents do to ensure the safety of their children? First of all, parents need to talk to their children often about what types of things their children are interested in. Not only is this good communication, this can ensure the safety of a child. Second, parents can warn their children about online predators and how they often appear to be a friend at first. Third, parents must warn their children NOT to EVER give personal information out on the internet. No real names, phone numbers, addresses, or whatever.

**Please note: my husband recently alerted me to a popular MySpace survey which asks unnecessary personal information about a person, such as their full name, date of birth, and city in which they were born. This information can allow unsavory people to find out exactly who your child is and where he or she is living.**

Fourth, parents must create a line of communication that allows their children to come to them and talk about it if they have been frightened or disturbed by someone online.

The FBI and law enforcement have been working toward making the internet a safer place for people in general. It is easier today than it was even six months ago to catch and prosecute an online stalker. This is an evolving subject for law enforcement, but great strides have already

been made. If you feel your child was threatened, contact law enforcement.

I have included a link to the actual YouTube chatroom spot on my website, which is dedicated to the safety of young people online. Like I said earlier, this "chatroom" is pretty true-to-life, but it shows what it would be like if the people were actually sitting in a room together. My site can be found here:

[http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents\\_peace\\_of\\_mind.html](http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents_peace_of_mind.html)

## **What kinds of people target children on the internet?**

We've all been hearing about pedophiles who make victims of children on the internet, and with the Dateline NBC series titled To Catch a Predator, millions of Americans actually viewed some of these predators.

When we think of a predator, we often think of a reclusive, "redneck" sort of person, toothless, wearing a muscle shirt (sometimes called a "wife-beater") while typing rapidly online; all the while pretending to be a 15 year old boy. However, that was not the type of person America witnessed entering the homes set up as sting operations by Dateline and law enforcement.

There was the baby faced unemployed man who, one day after being caught by law enforcement, was caught committing the same, exact cyber crime using a McDonald's WiFi system the very next day! Even Chris Hanson of Dateline NBC couldn't hide his incredulity on camera as the man emerged

from the fast food lobby after his online actions had been watched by law enforcement.

Then, there was the young man who had been married exactly two months. Two months of marriage, and he felt he had to pursue an under aged girl for sex online!!

Then, there was the rabbi. A clergyman; a man of the cloth. A person who holds the highest respect within the Jewish community and beyond. That man is now serving a prison sentence for his crime.

There have been other news sources that reported crimes that were committed after an adult and a child met online. In Danbury Connecticut, a sixth grade girl was killed by a man she had originally met online, and whom she had met with on several occasions for sex.

Also in Connecticut, not very far from the first crime, a 16 year old girl was raped by a man who she met on an internet chatroom.

In Western Washington, an admitted pedophile created an "instruction manual" of sorts for pedophile. From Fox News:

**A Web site created by a pedophile is a virtual "how-to" manual, complete with the best places in western Washington state to see little girls, and tips on how to avoid getting caught by the police.**

This man has pictures of little girls from the area; children who have not given permission to be photographed. Neither have their parents given this man permission to post pictures of their

vulnerable children online. Police cannot do anything to stop this man because he has not officially committed a crime. Yet, his website has pictures of local children on it. A website **DESIGNED** for pedophiles.

Parents, it is my opinion that you **MUST** take action that will protect your child from becoming the next statistic. If you haven't already warned them not to give out personal information such as addresses and telephone numbers, do it today. View their profiles on networking sites such as MySpace, and look at their buddy lists. Ask to see what sites they frequent and ask what they like about those sites. Ask the hard questions, too; has anyone ever approached you on an internet site and said or done something that made you feel uncomfortable?

I am committed to keeping children and teens safe from online dangers. Not only is there information for parents on my website, but there is a message board forum for parents, educators, and other interested parties to discuss what can be done to keep kids safe online, as well as a place to post stories about steps your family has taken to keep your own children safe online. I've also included a page of news stories that show what can and does happen to children from people they have encountered on the Internet. Another feature of my site is a partnership with others who have websites designed for online safety for children. Among these is CyberAngels, and KidsBeSafeOnline.

Anyone with information for parents or educators on how to keep kids safe online, or anyone who would like to see information about online safety is free to visit my site. Come and chat, post

your story, or simply take a look at the information.

[http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents\\_peace\\_of\\_mind.html](http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents_peace_of_mind.html)

## **Keep Your Kid Safe On The Internet! Law Enforcement Agencies And Citizen Groups**

I have already submitted a couple of articles about the dangers the internet holds for children.

My next series of articles will be about the various citizen groups and law enforcement agencies that work to deter or stop predators and keep children safe online.

The first group I want to cover is a group called Perverted Justice. Their "nickname", or what they are also known as is PeeJ. Perverted Justice is a citizen group that was set up for the purpose of identifying adults willing to have chat room sexual encounters with minors. Millions of Americans have seen this group in action during the operation series called "To Catch a Predator" that Dateline NBC carried out on the air.

The people who make up Perverted Justice are volunteers. These volunteers carry out sting operations, using "young" sounding screen names, such as sara\_so\_bored. They then wait for older men to approach them in chatrooms. The volunteers of PeeJ do not make the first contact with the adults, but instead wait to be approached.

Once the men approach the volunteer (who they think is a young teen girl or boy), the volunteer works to get identifying information from the men; information such as a phone number. This

information is usually given during talk about setting up an offline meeting with the perceived minor. The PeeJ volunteer then uses a Reverse Look Up service to find out the name of the person who owns the telephone number, and passes the information on to law enforcement.

Perverted Justice was started in 2002 by Xavier Von Erck of Portland Oregon, who got the idea after watching men attempt to woo young girls in chatrooms in Oregon. Von Erck says that PeeJ is a computer watchdog agency that works closely with law enforcement. During the 'To Catch a Predator' stings put on by Dateline NBC, Perverted Justice was actually temporarily deputized by law enforcement, since some of the operation was required by law to have been carried out by members of law enforcement.

Von Erck goes on to say that "The media likes to use the term vigilante because it gets attention, but we don't consider ourselves vigilantes. We cultivate cooperation with police and work within the law to get justice, not outside of the law."

Perverted Justice's volunteers act as bait in chatrooms where children and minors can often be found. The profiles the volunteers set up have youthful sounding nicknames and often pictures of children. The volunteers do not initiate contact with the men, but instead wait for the men to first come to them. They refuse to act on tips from internet users, to avoid the risk that someone might use the website for purposes of revenge.

If a man starts chatting with the volunteer and turns the conversation toward sex, the volunteer

attempts to obtain identifying information from the man; information such as a telephone number so that a "meeting can be arranged".

In years past, the chatlog and details would then be published on Perverted Justice's website. However, beginning in 2003, the organization began its "Information First" program, in which interested police departments could contact Perverted Justice, and any busts made within the jurisdiction of that department would be sent to them without having been posted to the website.

In the early days, PeeJ did not initiate contact with the police, due to the difficulty of prosecuting online criminals in a court of law. Because the law has evolved in such a way that law enforcement now CAN and regularly DOES prosecute online criminals, PeeJ has switched to a policy of cold calling local police with the information they obtained. If a one of the government agencies is interested (police, FBI, military CID, etc.) then the chatlog and other information is not posted to the site until after a conviction has been reached.

To date, Perverted Justice has been responsible for over 100 convictions of online predators. Some of those convictions were witnessed by television-watching Americans, glued to their T.V. screens during the airing of Dateline NBC's To Catch a Predator series. One of these "public convictions" was a rabbi, who entered a home with the intention of having sexual relations with a minor boy. The "candid-camera" photograph of this rabbi as he was caught by Dateline NBC is posted on my website, which is dedicated to keeping kids safe online.

My website is interactive and includes a place for parents, educators, and interested parties to post methods of keeping kids safe online, as well as a message board where people can chat about online safety and what can be done. I have a page that shows Internet Safety in the news, as well as a page dedicated to educating parents on what can be done to "keep your kid safe on the internet". Everyone is welcome.

[http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents\\_peace\\_of\\_mind.html](http://angelasdiscountmarket.com/parents_peace_of_mind.html)

## Safe Surfing - Miss America Spokesperson for Internet Safety

Lauren Nelson, better known as Miss America 2007, has dedicated her reign to promoting safety on the internet for children.

"When I was 13, I experienced first-hand the potential dangers of unsafe Internet use. Some friends and I made the mistake of giving our names, ages and locations to someone online who we later discovered was a sexual predator. After we received inappropriate photographs from this person, we immediately told our parents, and the situation was defused without incident. Unfortunately, not all kids are as lucky as my friends and I were. That's why I feel an obligation as Miss America to help children avoid dangerous situations online." Miss Nelson says.

Ms. Nelson knows that her platform as Miss America gives her the publicity she needs to get the word out about the dangers lurking online. The online predator Ms. Nelson encountered, she and

her friends “met” online seven years ago. The problem is even more widespread today.

There are tips that I give to kids, there are tips that I give to parents," says Nelson "Kids, don't talk to strangers, don't share personal information and involve an adult if you feel uncomfortable.

"Parents, be involved with your kids activities, download the available software, and definitely keep the computer in a high-traffic area.

One of the most public things Miss America has done is to team up with America's Most Wanted to do a sting operation for men surfing the internet looking for young girls to victimize. Ms.

Nelson's pictures as a teen were used as profile pics and the men believed they were talking to a young teen girl. It wasn't long after "14 year old Jen" appeared online that men were approaching her to begin sexually oriented chats.

Similar to the sting operation viewed by millions on Dateline NBC, America's Most Wanted lured the predators to a home with the belief that they would be meeting an under aged girl for sex.

Once the men arrived at the home, they received what was probably the biggest surprise of their lives: television cameras and America's Most Wanted host John Walsh, as well as a team of specially trained cops and Miss America Lauren Nelson were waiting.

Recent news has confirmed that these men will go to trial and that Miss America will testify

against them. Ms. Nelson also has interviewed sexual predators who are now serving sentences for their internet crimes. In the video-televised interview with "Simon", Miss America gets into the head of a sexual predator and gets valuable information about how he operated when committing his crimes against a 14 year old girl and her 12 year old sister. Simon also gave information about the types of kids he preyed on and why he preyed on those particular kids.

She came from a home with an alcoholic mother. The father had abandoned them. She had low self esteem issues. These are the keys and clues that a person using the internet will use to seek and find vulnerable people.

Miss America has been named an honorary Deputy Sheriff in Bedford County - a distinction also held by NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal. Both are spokespeople for the Safe Surfin' foundation, which promotes internet safety and gives information for parents, educators, and interested parties.

I have included the actual video of Miss America and America's Most Wanted's televised sting on the "Internet Safety In The News" page of my site. Feel free to watch this and other videos regarding internet safety there.

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## Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

**While the digital age presents new opportunities, it also poses new threats to young people. The Internet allows predators to make contact with unsuspecting children. It means the exploitation of children in one country can devastate families half a world away. It has turned child pornography into a global crisis.**

**Pornographic images of children are not exercises in free speech. They are criminal acts of child abuse. The United States is working to end this abuse through the government's Internet Crimes Against Children task forces. With the help of task force members, federal prosecution of child pornography and abuse has increased from 350 cases in 1998 to more than 1,400 cases in 2005."**

**-First Lady Laura Bush**

## **Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces**

**The Internet Crimes Against Children Task force program exists under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Justice, as a portion of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). This program trains individual states and government entities to set up their own task forces to combat cyber crimes against our most vulnerable of citizens, our children.**

**At its conception, New York Senator Hillary Clinton asked congress for funding of \$25 million to get the program rolling. The ICAC Task Force Program was set up to help State and local law enforcement agencies augment and strengthen their investigative response to predators who use**

the Internet, online communication systems, or other computer technology to sexually exploit children. 46 Regional Task Force Agencies currently make up the program. Those agencies are relatively evenly spread across the nation, and the majority of states are represented.

Law enforcement has long been aware that the naiveté and trusting natures of most children make them easy targets for predators. Teenagers, while older and a few years wiser, remain vulnerable to victimization. These governing agencies know that more than 77 million kids are online today. They also realize that the nature of the Internet presents a never before faced complexity to investigating crimes, collecting evidence, identifying and apprehending offenders, and assisting child victims and their families.

One big reason for this is the anonymity of the Internet. Unless there is viable evidence that a person committed an online crime, the argument could be raised that “someone else” either hacked into the accused person’s accounts or used his computer while they were a visitor in the accused person’s home. Another reason for this is that the crimes often cross several jurisdictions, and the victim and the perpetrator are often separated geographically.

Predators can and do travel hundreds of miles to different states and countries to engage in sexual acts with children they met over the Internet. Many of these cases involve local, state, federal, and international law enforcement entities in multiple jurisdictions.

The national Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force provides training to the state and

local branches of the ICAC, so that they are better equipped to handle this escalating online problem. Some of the training courses include the Investigative Techniques Training Program, the Child Sex Offender Accountability Training Program, and the Undercover Chat Investigations Training Program.

Each local Internet Crimes Against Children task force is composed of federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel. Federal and local prosecution officials participate as well, as do local educators and service providers such as mental health professionals. The local task forces serve as valuable regional resources to assist parents, educators, prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, and others who work on child victimization issues.

## WiFi Turns Internet Into Hideout for Criminals

In February of this year, the Washington Post ran a story that made Americans aware that with all the strides that have been made to keep criminals away from children online, the effort is far from over. The previous summer, detectives arrived at a high rise building in Arlington County to arrest a suspected pedophile who had been traced to an apartment from his online trading of child pornography.

When detectives arrived at the apartment, they found an elderly woman who lived alone. It did not take long to realize that the problem was her wireless router which, obviously, one of her

unscrupulous neighbors had tapped into in order to conduct his online pedophilia. Anybody in any apartment in the elderly woman's 10 story building could have accessed the internet through the woman's router. The detectives had to go back to the drawing board on this crime.

The authorities were aware that one of the neighbors probably were uploading photographs of nude children via the woman's router, and doing so made the perpetrator virtually untraceable.

There are almost 46,000 WiFi access points across the nation. Quite a few of these are free. Hundreds of thousands of people are logging in to wireless networks every day from places like restaurants, rest stops, hotels, and in some cases, even park benches. Although the majority of those people are simply checking their e-mail and surfing the Web or shopping online, authorities said an increasing number of criminals are taking advantage of the anonymity offered by the wireless signals to commit a raft of serious crimes -- from identity theft to the sexual solicitation of children.

"We're not sure yet how to combat that," said Kevin R. West, a federal agent who oversees the computer crimes unit in North Carolina's State Bureau of Investigation. "Free wireless spots are everywhere, and it makes it easy for people . . . to sit there and do their nefarious acts. The fear is that if we talk about it, people will learn about it and say, 'I can go to a parking lot, and no one will catch me.' But we need to talk about it so that we can figure out how to solve it."

Most newer computers come equipped with a wireless card, and many users of even older models are buying wireless cards for their machines. Anyone with this device can access the Internet from any of the public WiFi "hotspots," as they're called. People with wireless cards who live in close proximity to others who have unsecured wireless routers can also access the internet through their neighbors' networks. This renders offenders of internet crimes almost untraceable, and causes major headaches for law abiding citizens.

"It's frustrating for officers," said Todd Shipley, director of training services at the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics. "If a suspect is going from coffee shop to coffee shop and using free signals to commit crimes, the police probably aren't going to catch him. That's the reality." Authorities say that businesses and cities that offer free connections need some way to track the users, such as filtering measures that could scan to see who is accessing the network.

West tells about a recent case, where a truck driver used free wireless signals at motels across the country to post and view pornographic images of children at a web site. By pure luck, the man was caught, West says. When the suspect got online from his home computer, authorities were able to trace his computer's Internet Protocol address, or the unique set of numbers assigned to every computer that uses the Internet. That number, which serves as a virtual street address, often leads authorities to the offender's physical residence.

**"Otherwise he would've slipped through the cracks," West said. "We wouldn't have been able to identify him."**

**Nowadays, the Internet is as much a part of an officer's arsenal as his gun and handcuffs. A growing number of officers are being assigned to patrol cyberspace. Across the nation, 46 multi-jurisdictional Internet Crimes Against Children task forces have been created to carry out online sting operations aimed at ensnaring sex offenders, because a man tapping away on a computer in Delaware might very well be soliciting a child in California. Every week, federal and local authorities cast their nets.**

**Those assigned to the task forces patrol the virtual streets for pedophiles and others who are attempting to commit crimes against children. Using tracking devices, the officers trace a suspect's IP address. But as technology improves, so also do the tactics of criminals. Closing cases is more difficult if the IP address originated from a wireless signal because it often leads back to the owner of the network instead of the criminal, much like the case where the officers were led to the home of the elderly woman. The network's owner's only "involvement" might have simply been possessing an unsecured network.**

**The problem is going to get worse, authorities said. Every day, more homes, businesses and entire jurisdictions are outfitted with wireless networks, creating an almost seamless patchwork of available Internet connections to anyone with a laptop and the desire to get online.**

"This is part of the future . . . and we're working to catch up and educate the public," said Capt. Tommy Turner of the Virginia State Police.

## **Governor Meeting Addresses Internet Safety**

A panel of governors who met last week for the annual meeting of the National Governors Association were told that "vigilant parents and well-educated children remain the first line of defense against online predators". Experts added that social networking sites were toughening standards and police are becoming more adept at handling online crime; but if the parents are not involved with what their children are doing online, children are still in great danger.

Richard Wistocki, an Internet crimes investigator with the police department in Naperville, Illinois says that parents of victims in child predator cases often tell him "I never thought my kid would take a picture of herself naked, leave with somebody they met online, all those things." He adds that "if the parent doesn't go and check, how do you know?" Wistocki advises that parents "go online themselves and keep track of what their children are doing".

Miss America Lauren Nelson was a speaker for the Governors' event. Nelson made online safety her platform because of her own experience and that of her friends with an online predator sending them inappropriate photographs when she was 13. "The best way to police the Internet is to do it from our side of the keyboard", Nelson told the panel.

Posing as a teenager in online chat rooms, Nelson took part in an April sting operation that led

to charges against 11 men. She announced last month she would tour the nation with a security software company to promote the issue.

**“Law enforcement agencies are becoming more technologically proficient in the fight against cyberspace child stalkers”, New Hampshire Attorney General Kelly Ayotte said during the Governor meeting. “But they alone can't solve a problem so widespread that 1 in 5 kids who use the Internet are believed to have been approached by a predator. This is an issue that we're not going to arrest our way out of,”**

**It's a problem "far bigger than any of us realize," said Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma.**