

## Family Insider ~ Kid Solicits Self Online

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The season of gift giving has passed, and now it's time for your kids to show off their new digital toys. The question: To whom are they showing off?

i-SAFE first reported a disturbing trend among youth more than a year ago. The lead article of the November 2004 edition of the *i-SAFE Times* (<http://www.isafe.org/imgs/pdf/newsletter/2004/newsletter-11.pdf>) was entitled "Cam-girls and Sugar Daddies." It revealed students using their webcams, and their bodies, for profit. Fast-forward 13 months to an article in a recent edition of *The New York Times*, which breaks the story wide open. The newspaper uncovers a teen who admits to selling pictures of his body on the Internet and more. For five years, Justin Berry solicited himself to more than 1500 pedophiles who, in turn, paid him hundreds of thousands of dollars. It all started with a webcam.

As some of you gift givers may know, you can purchase a webcam for less than \$20. At age 13, Justin received his webcam free for opening an e-mail account. He just wanted to meet new friends his age. Instead, he received immediate contact from pedophiles. One of them offered him \$50 to sit in front of the webcam with his shirt off. Justin told *The New York Times* reporter, "I figured, I took off my shirt at the pool for nothing. So, I was kind of like, what's the difference?"

And that's what parents need to remember about their kids: They are naive! It starts with a request kids consider no big deal. Each time they comply with a request, their guard drops a little. With each request, their online "friend" asks to see a little more. Justin progressed from sitting with his shirt off to traveling across the country to meet his solicitors. Now, he is 19 years old, is recovering from a marijuana and cocaine habit, and has been molested countless times by numerous offenders.



The big question: How did his parents not know this was happening? First and foremost, the computer was in his bedroom. Many times, with his mom in the house, Justin would perform for his solicitors. Second, he had a PayPal account (a "client" walked him through the steps to set up his account) and received cash instead of gifts. Third, he was savvier than his mom. When asked about his gifts, he would tell her that he bought the items with the extra money that came from his Web design business. Fourth, the lure of easy money and attention in the form of praise and gifts was too tempting for this 13-year-old, as it would be for most kids that age.

Unfortunately, the story of this honor roll student soccer player is not an isolated incident. Justin revealed to *The New York Times* and authorities that hundreds of minors and thousands of pedophiles

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*"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity, there is beauty and there is strength."*

*- Maya Angelou*

### NAC Tracks

Does your kid have a webcam?

Yes

Vote here

No



## Family Insider ~ *Kid Solicits Self Online*

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were involved in this sordid activity. Justin is now a federal witness, and all of his PayPal records and computer files are evidence. Many of his “clients” have been arrested, and some are already serving prison time. More are currently being tracked down.

Don’t overreact and throw out the computer and the webcam. They are still really cool gifts. Just make sure your kids know the dangers that lurk online and how to respond to inappro-

priate or dangerous requests. Share this story with them in an age-appropriate way, and, most importantly, make sure their computers and webcams are in an open area of your home. Be involved in what your kids are doing online, and become part of their Internet experiences. It’s the best way to be sure they will not have the same online experience as Justin Berry.

FactMonster is an all-in-one reference and fun site for kids. Among its most awesome features include daily quizzes and facts, as well as a kid-friendly encyclopedia, dictionary, atlas, and almanac, and games. Kids can even get help with common homework topics and submit questions to homework helpers. Grab your kids and take a look! Visit <http://www.factmonster.com>.



## Tech Tip

**Q:** I’ve been hearing about new technology that I can use to keep track of my daughter when she or I am away from home. What are these devices called, and are there risks associated with their use?

**A:** While there have been a slew of new child-tracking technology devices introduced this past year, the jury is still out on whether these so-called “Kid Trackers” are more of an aid to parents or a threat to privacy. A quick search of the Web revealed no less than a dozen high-tech devices, from remote nanny cameras that can be viewed and controlled by your cell phone, GPS monitoring systems that can report your teen’s location on a map viewed on your Internet-enabled computer, to a simple key chain that sends an alarm to the parents’ base

station when the child gets out of a predefined range.

If you have a child that tends to wonder off in public places, or if you are unsure of the new babysitter you hired, one of these devices may be just what you need to help you enjoy your time out. While privacy advocates may argue that these new gizmos represent an invasion of your child’s rights, this holds little water when compared to the sinking feeling in every parent’s gut who, even momentarily, has lost track of his or her son or daughter in a public place. One thing is sure: This new breed of “Kid Trackers” is a vast improvement over the child leash that was the fad in the 80s.

Although a certain amount of peace of mind can be obtained by using these devices, they can never replace the need to educate your child about



safe and responsible behavior when in public. Rest assured that as technology creates new tools to keep track of our children, the tools used by those that prey on them will also evolve.

## Ask an Expert ~ Online Secret Code



**Q:** What is the secret code that my kids seem to be using online?

**A:** With the increased use of chat rooms, instant messengers, e-mail, and text messaging, a new language using acronyms and/or symbols has emerged. While this new language can be perplexing to the untrained eye, it is quickly finding its way into everyday use and is becoming widely accepted as a new language form.

Much of this new chat language originated to save keystrokes. For example, “u” was used for “you”, “r” for “are”, “4” for “for”, etc. Some are quite easy to decipher once you know that they could be acronyms or abbreviations for other words. However, others were devised to hide the meaning of what the user was trying to say (like “POS” for “parents over shoulder” or “P911” meaning “parents are watching”) and are more difficult to decode.

In the Internet gaming community, there is an additional form of online language called leetspeak, or leet for short. This specific type of computer slang frequently uses numbers and non-alphabetical characters to replace letters. The term “leetspeak” is often written “13375p33k” or “!337\$p34k.” Non-alphanumeric characters many times are also combined to form letters (for example, using slashes like “/\” to create the letter “M”). Letters are also substituted by other letters

that sound alike—the letter S and Z are used interchangeably, as are the letters C and K, and X is often used to replace C or K. Using this method, “skills” could be written “5x1llz.” In leetspeak, grammar and typing errors are rarely corrected, so you’ll often see “teh” (the), “vry” (very), “pron” (porn), and ImPrOpEr CaPiTaLiZaTiOn.

Many households are using monitoring or blocking software to ensure the safety of their children online. While monitoring and blocking software are useful, nothing replaces the importance of being actively involved in your child’s online activities. Chat slang is often not detected by monitoring or blocking software, and could enable your child and others to carry on inappropriate or dangerous conversations. It is important for parents to learn the meanings of the acronyms and symbols their children are sending or reading. It is also advisable that parents ensure their child’s IMs are being recorded in the IM history/archives of the IM program. If your child becomes a victim online, his/her IM conversations could be a clue to what happened and how to help your child.

So, don’t be #-:o (confused). Check out the i-SAFE chat acronyms and symbols tip sheet at <http://www.isafe.org/imgs/pdf/Acronyms.pdf>.

Contact us at [outreach@isafe.org](mailto:outreach@isafe.org) to learn more about



## In Action ~ Resolve to be Safe Online

If you are making your annual list of the same old New Year’s resolutions, consider putting a new one at the top: teaching your children Internet safety.

Officer Leila Haack of the Missoula Police Department and I recently gave an i-SAFE presentation to junior high students. I work for the Division of Educational Research and Service at The University of Montana, and we have incorporated i-SAFE into our Safe Schools Project. It’s always shocking to find out how much time students spend online, yet how little time is spent at home learning to be safe online.

We were pleased to receive thank you notes and comments from many of the students:

*“I thought the presentation was very cool, and I learned a lot.”*

*“I think that you should continue telling kids about being*

*safe online because so many aren’t. Thanks again!”*

Missoula can be Anytown, USA. Since 2004, six residents, including a doctor, have been arrested for Internet predator crimes.

*“The biggest shocker for me was that this happens all too often, even in Missoula. I guess it’s one of those things where I know about it but never thought it could happen here—and to me.”*

*“My mother and I went into all my profiles and erased all that we could about me. I think showing these clips of what happened to those teenagers was a great way to alert people about what can happen. Keep doing this program.”*

So speak with your children today; you may be surprised at their responses!

Russ Grimes

Law Enforcement Information Technology Specialist

## Did You Know?



### Job-Hunting Safety

A new year is upon us, and many of you may be thinking of making some major changes in your lives, including finding a new job. If the prospect of searching for a new job online appeals to you, there are some precautions you should take concerning your resume and personal information.

Identity thieves are lurking in the cyber world. False job postings are often used to entice job seekers to submit their resumes. Using your online resume, and other information they subsequently get from talking to you on the phone or via e-mail, these Internet cons gain enough information to essentially destroy your financial life and/or commit crimes using your identity.

Here are some tips for safe job searching online:

- NEVER provide personal information (e.g., social security number, birth date, marital status, etc.) online or over the phone. Be sure to verify the legitimacy of the employer before giving out personal information.
- Be careful when providing credit card or bank information, or engaging in any monetary transactions. Again, verify the legitimacy of the employer with whom you are interacting.
- Do not respond to e-mails or offers of jobs from someone acting as a go-between for money transfers.
- Be cautious when dealing with contacts in foreign countries.
- Verify the legitimacy of the employer before agreeing to an in-person interview.

Good luck with your job search!

E-mail us at [outreach@isafe.org](mailto:outreach@isafe.org) to learn more about identity theft and other online safety concerns.

### Going . . . going . . . gone!

Internet auction Web sites like eBay offer consumers the opportunity to buy and sell merchandise through a bidding process at the click of a mouse. For consumers looking for bargains, collectibles, or obscure items, an Internet auction is the place to be.

However, there are some risks to buying or selling online. The Internet Crime Complaint Center, a partnership of the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, stated in its 2005 annual report on victims' complaints that Internet auction fraud was, by far, the most reported offense, comprising 71.2 percent of referred complaints. Nondelivered merchandise and/or payment accounted for 15.8 percent of complaints. Credit/debit card fraud made up 5.4 percent of complaints.

While some auction sites offer complaint services or antifraud guarantees, not all do. Because Internet auctions are often individuals buying and selling merchandise (much like

a table at a local flea market) rather than an auction house, consumers are often met with misrepresentation, defective goods, nondelivery, nonpayment, black market goods, and/or hidden charges. Buyers should read the site's help file, privacy statement, and user agreement before bidding.

As with any online purchase, the risk of identity theft is also present. Always use a secure third-party payment service (like PayPal or VeriSign), which allows you to transfer money into an online account and make payments from that account without exposing your real credit card or bank account information. Keep a record of what you pay for, and always check your online purchases against your statement(s).

For more advice on how to avoid auction fraud, check out the Microsoft tips at <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/online/auctionbid.mspx>.

### In Your Neighborhood



Everyday there are many i-SAFE America events going on across the country. We've made it easy for you to get involved and help spread the message of Internet safety to your peers and your community. Simply check out our "Calendar of Events" at [http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub\\_id=3](http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub_id=3) to find an event near you.

## The Power of One



## The Internship



Technology is everywhere and rapidly advancing. Children are also being exposed at younger ages. Today, an eight-year-old can turn on a com-

puter, surf the Internet, and chat with anyone he or she wants.

In a recent iSAFE America survey, 54 percent of parents felt limited in their ability to monitor and shelter their children from inappropriate material on the Internet. The survey also found that 37 percent of students said their parents would disapprove if they knew what they did, where they went, or with whom they chatted on the internet.

The problem, though, is that children now know more about computers and the Internet than their parents do—and they're learning at younger ages. If your child isn't educated about Internet safety, then you must

be. Otherwise your child is vulnerable to cyber bullying, predators, and more. That's why I am making a difference in my community by speaking to parents as part of iSAFE's i-PARENT Campaign.

iSAFE provides a kit with PowerPoint presentations on cyber predators, cyber bullying, and cyber security. After watching these presentations, I work with parents to teach different topics at home. The kit even covers plagiarism and illegal downloading, which are huge issues among my peers. And remember, you don't have to be a computer wiz to do it. All it takes is common sense.

*Angel, California*

## Internet Safety Tip for Parents



Become part of your child's online experience. The best time is now. Every minute you wait is another minute for someone else to influence your child's online experience.

We won't deny it—this will be a *lot* easier for parents of younger children. If you go online with them today, they will see nothing wrong with you joining them tomorrow. Use the Internet as a tool to educate. Have them show you where they go and what they do. Show them where you go and what you do. Pop-up ads will inevitably be around—use them to show your kids that there is inappropriate material online. Show them how to close the window, and encourage them to always come to you when they are in trouble.

For parents with older children, being a part of their online experience does not necessarily mean sitting at the computer with them—we know they won't allow that. But work on subtle ways of approaching them. Casual conversation during chores, helping with homework, dinner table chats. You know your child better than we do, so find that special way to reach them.

Whether your child is young or old, be a part of their online experience. No matter how difficult the task is, the alternative of meeting an online predator could be much worse.



## Get Involved

Welcome to 2006! Your “Get Involved” challenge this year will be a step-by-step walk through the forming of an i-PARENT Board. Instead of leading you blindly through the process month after month, for those who want to jump ahead, here are the steps to take:

1. Select a director.
2. Identify and invite community members to join.
3. Set a date and time for the first meeting.
4. Invite local policy makers.
5. Attract local media.
6. Conduct the meeting.
7. Plan activities to spread the message throughout the year.

Each month from now on we will break down a step for you. When you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at [parents@isafe.org](mailto:parents@isafe.org). Happy surfing!



## Questions, Comments, or Contributions

At i-SAFE America, we welcome them all. Do you have a question or a comment about an article? Do you have a story you wish to share with other readers? Do you know somebody whose story will inspire others to get involved? Whatever the case, we would like to know. Please e-mail us at [editor@isafe.org](mailto:editor@isafe.org) with questions, comments, or contributions. If snail mail is your preference, send written correspondence to:

i-SAFE Editor  
5963 La Place Ct.  
Suite 309  
Carlsbad, CA 92008

All communication with the editor will be confidential unless otherwise specified by you, the sender.

Thank you for your input, but more importantly, thank you for reading and making a difference in your community.

Sincerely,  
i-SAFE America

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

## About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE America Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. The goal is to educate students on how to avoid dangerous, inappropriate, or unlawful online behavior. i-SAFE accomplishes this through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. It is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. [www.isafe.org](http://www.isafe.org)

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