

Internet Crimes

By Thomas J. Carr

The subject of Internet crime is something that has become increasingly popular and more relevant in the current age. As we start to spend more and more time online and the age of children who use the Internet becomes younger and younger, there is a lot to keep in mind when it comes to you and your kid's safety.

In particular, the well-being of underage children has been in the spotlight lately due to shows like Dateline's "To Catch a Predator." On this program, a vigilante group called "Perverved Justice" teams up with the police to catch online predators by pretending to be underage children in chat rooms. They set up a time and place to meet and when the men arrive a camera crew and handcuffs soon greet them. While I agree that these predators do indeed need to be stopped, the show is meant for boosting network ratings, not to enforce crime. If it were strictly the police behind the whole scenario that is one thing, but when a non-law enforcement agency whose "officers" have not had background checks done are taking the law into their own hands, that's where I object.

Another case where the Internet has played a large role in the safety and, in this instance, the death, of a child deals with the popular social networking site MySpace. The story of a 49-year-old woman who created a fake MySpace account pretending to be a teenage boy to harass a young girl who ended up committing suicide is just sick and wrong. She obviously created the account intending to cause harm to the girl and therefore deserves to go to jail. While I am a firm believer in the constitution and the right to free speech, this clearly crosses the line. I, however, do not place any blame on MySpace itself for the girl's death. I feel strongly that we should limit lawsuits to people who have truly done something wrong, not drag an honest business into the mix just to reach for the deepest pockets.