

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**INTERACTIVE INTERNET SAFETY SOFTWARE PROTECTING  
CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL SOLICITATION  
AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE**

**Boys & Girls Clubs of America and National Center for Missing &  
Exploited Children Deliver "NetSmartz Workshop" To Clubs and Internet**

WASHINGTON D.C., (March 5, 2003) — Approximately one in five children were sexually solicited or approached over the Internet in 1999.<sup>1</sup>

In response to this disturbing statistic, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) have delivered the NetSmartz Workshop software to all 3,100 Boys & Girls Clubs and made it available for free on the Internet at [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org). The announcement was made at the Eastern Branch of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington today by Ernie Allen, President, NCMEC, Roxanne Spillett, President, BGCA, Robbie Callaway, Chairman, NCMEC, Senior Vice President, BGCA, and Clicky, Spokesrobot, the NetSmartz Workshop.

NCMEC and BGCA teamed up to create a high-tech Internet safety program for our children to provide BGCA with original, animated characters and age-appropriate, interactive lessons on CD-ROM using the latest 3-D and web technologies to entertain and educate. The NetSmartz Workshop pilot tested the program at selected Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide in late 2002. Sponsorship from private corporations enables the NetSmartz Workshop and its innovative content to be shared with children, parents, educators, and law enforcement globally via the Internet at [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org).

<sup>1</sup>David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2000, page ix.

A Program of



NetSmartz Workshop

at the

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- more -

“The growing number of children utilizing the Internet has increased the need for Internet safety resources like NetSmartz,” stated Ernie Allen, president of NCMEC. “NetSmartz is an invaluable interactive resource for parents and educators who want to make a child’s Internet experience a safer one.”

The software features state-of-the-art educational content focusing on online safety for kids, including protecting children from online sexual predators and other dangers. The NetSmartz Workshop is divided into three sections.

### **NetSmartz Kids**

Children aged 5 to 6 are introduced to Clicky who teaches children about dangers on the Internet, how to avoid them, and how to practice good “netiquette.” Clicky introduces children to the “Webville Outlaws” who represent different Internet dangers. Children aged 7 to 12 are introduced to Nettie and Webster, two Internet kids who talk to children about online risks and introduce them to the “WizzyWigs,” creepy characters who represent Internet dangers.

### **NetSmartz Teens**

The goal of NetSmartz Teens is to help teenagers learn how to use the Internet more safely. This section contains a real-life example of a teen who encountered dangers online. In the future this site will provide safety tips and surveys about personal safety on the Internet.

### **Parents & Educators**

Parents and educators can access the web site to get on- and offline activities and ideas for teaching Internet safety so that they can help their children and/or students avoid the risks they face online. Parents and educators are provided relevant and current information on Internet safety issues that affect children.

“NetSmartz entertains while it educates,” said Roxanne Spillett, president of BGCA. “It is critical that children, parents, and educators across the nation have the tools they need to have a safe Internet experience. Now everyone has access to these tools whether it is at their local Boys & Girls Club or at [www.NetSmartz.org](http://www.NetSmartz.org).”

"On March 3, a 25-year-old Connecticut man pled guilty to killing a 13-year-old girl he met on the Internet. Our belief is that NetSmartz can help prevent children from being lured by such animals who prey on innocent children," Robbie Callaway, Chairman, NCMEC, and Senior Vice President, BGCA.

BGCA leaders and children played vital roles in helping to refine the appearance of the characters and program content, ensuring that the NetSmartz messages were on target and characters appealed to the respective age groups.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization that works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCMEC has access to both the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS). NCMEC operates the CyberTipline, an online mechanism to report child sexual exploitation such as online enticement of children for sex acts and child pornography. Mandated by the U.S. Congress in 1998, the CyberTipline has received over 100,000 reports leading to hundreds of arrests of child predators. Created in 1984 NCMEC has aided law-enforcement officials in the search for more than 87,000 missing children. More than 71,000 children have been recovered as a result. For more information about NCMEC, call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or visit [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com).

Boys & Girls Clubs of America comprises a national network of more than 3,000 neighborhood-based facilities annually serving some 3.3 million young people, primarily from disadvantaged circumstances. Known as "The Positive Place for Kids," the Clubs provide guidance-oriented character development programs on a daily basis for children 6 to 18 years old, conducted by a full-time professional staff. Key Boys & Girls Club programs, such as Youth of the Year, emphasize character and leadership development, education and career enhancement, health and life skills, the arts, sports, fitness, and recreation.

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