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ATTORNEY GENERAL

NEWS RELEASE

ATTORNEY GENERAL LAUTENSCHLAGER ANNOUNCES DOJ PARTNERSHIP WITH "NETSMARTZ" ONLINE CHILD SAFETY PROGRAM

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MADISON - Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager announced the partnership of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) with the national children's online safety program, NetSmartz, at two news conferences today in Madison and Milwaukee.

"The NetSmartz program, provided free to Wisconsin children, parents, educators and community groups, enhances the ongoing work of the DOJ Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force," Lautenschlager said today. "This creative teaching program provides Wisconsin children ages 5 through 17 with strategies for staying safe online."

Downloadable activities, an Internet safety pledge in English and Spanish, and a certificate of completion are included in the program, demonstrated today with Wisconsin schoolchildren and volunteers. All of the materials are free to the public and can be accessed on the NetSmartz website at www.NetSmartz.org.

NetSmartz goals include to:

- Enhance the ability of children to recognize dangers on the Internet
- Enhance the ability of children to understand that people they first "meet" on the Internet should never be considered a friend
- Encourage children to report suspicious behavior to a trusted adult
- Support and enhance community online education efforts
- Provide child victimization prevention strategies to parents/guardians
- Combat the downloading of illegal or copyrighted material

“We are excited about the partnership in Wisconsin and their dedication to bringing important Internet safety messages to kids and teens,” said Rick Minicucci, President of The NetSmartz Workshop. “NetSmartz aims to prevent online victimization and to empower children to make responsible decisions while on the Internet. The animated materials reinforce safety messages through music and interactive activities.”

With the help of the Wisconsin Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Kiwanis, Sheriff’s Departments, Police Departments, District Attorney Offices, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalitions, and the Eastern District U.S. Attorney’s Victim Witness Coordinator, NetSmartz programming is helping Wisconsin kids and parents confidently venture online.

The DOJ ICAC Task Force has trained over 80 volunteers and partnered with 25 law enforcement agencies statewide. The DOJ ICAC Task Force’s efforts led to 120 arrests of Internet child predators in 2005 -- among the highest number of such arrests in the country.

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