



Department of Justice

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES MARYLAND DETECTIVE FOR CAPTURING PEDOPHILE, IDENTIFYING 42 VICTIMS

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today honored Detective George R. Higgs of the Charles County Sheriff’s Office in La Plata, Maryland, for his investigation that resulted in the arrest of a sexual predator and the identification of 42 adolescent victims.

Acting Associate Attorney General Jesse Panuccio presented Higgs with the Missing Children’s Child Protection Award during the Justice Department’s National Missing Children’s Day ceremony. The award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of law enforcement officers who make a significant investigative or program contribution to protect children from abuse or victimization.

“Investigative and preventive law enforcement efforts are critical in the fight to stop child exploitation,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jesse Panuccio. “The Justice Department proudly commends Detective Higgs for his dedication to preventing child victimization and bringing this sex offender to justice.”

Higgs began to investigate in November 2016 after a 16-year-old student complained about receiving sexually suggestive text messages. Higgs determined the messages were coming from an employee for the Charles County Board of Education. A search of the suspect’s home led to the discovery of computers and cell phones containing photos and videos of the suspect sexually assaulting local children in both his residence and at local schools. Interviews with students identified 42 victims—including the original complainant—between the ages of 13 and 17. Higgs’ work with prosecutors resulted in 219 charges of sexual assault, production of child pornography and other charges against the suspect, who was sentenced in federal court in March and in the Circuit Court of Charles County, Maryland, in April.

In addition to Higgs, the Department also recognized other law enforcement officers for their investigative efforts in sexual exploitation of children cases and a private citizen who intervened to rescue an abducted baby. Panuccio also recognized Eden Hoffmann, a fifth grader at Huron Elementary School in Clinton Township, Michigan, as the 19th winner of the National Missing Children’s Day poster contest.

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Additional information about [National Missing Children's Day](#) is available online.

The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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