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Sex sting nets Valpo, Crown Point men

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VALPARAISO | Two men from Valparaiso and another from Crown Point are among 24 accused Internet predators picked up last weekend in a multijurisdictional sweep that one official likened to shooting fish in a barrel.

The Valparaiso men were identified Tuesday as Matthew Hensley, 24, who coached basketball at Andrean High School in Merrillville and is the son of Carl Hensley, recently hired as athletic director at Portage Township Schools; and James Daniel, 30, according to U.S. Attorney Joseph Van Bokkelen.

Also arrested was David Rouhselang, 41, of Crown Point.

The men are accused of approaching someone they thought was an underage girl on the Internet and traveling last weekend to a vacant apartment in Valparaiso expecting to have sex with the girl.

They were greeted instead by representatives of a special task force made up of 29 federal, state and local agencies, who spent 21 days on the undercover effort that netted arrests in Porter, St. Joseph and Tippecanoe counties.

Additional arrests are expected, Van Bokkelen said.

He said attempts will be made to hold the accused without bail. If convicted, each faces a minimum of 10 years in prison.

Eighteen of the accused are being prosecuted in the Northern District of Indiana courthouse in Hammond and almost all have confessed, Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip Benson said in court Tuesday.

In addition to causing concerns for other online predators, Van Bokkelen said he hoped the arrests would serve as a wake-up call to parents.

"It's not somebody else's children being stalked by these predators, it's your children," he said.

He urged parents to move computers out of bedrooms and other isolated areas of the home and supervise children when they are using the Internet. Parents also should learn a child's password to sites such as Myspace.com and take a look at what type of conversations they are having, he said.

"You wouldn't let a stranger in your house to proposition your daughter," he said.

Yet that is exactly what is going on and with little hesitation on the part of predators, Porter County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Brian Gensel said.

Gensel said officers posing as underage girls told him they were approached within five minutes of being online and the predators did not hesitate to start a sexual conversation or share graphic images of themselves.

Gensel and Porter County Sheriff's Department Chief Deputy David Lain said parents are not taking the threat seriously enough, judging by all the empty chairs at recent programs on the topic.

Lain voiced hope there would be more interest by parents now that schools are back in session.

Times staff writer Joe Carlson contributed to this story.

[EXTRAS]

The following are 23 men accused of using the Internet to coerce and entice children to engage in sexual activity. The accused are grouped according to the county where the sting operation originated.

Porter County

David C. Rouhselang, 41, of Crown Point
Clayton McNeely, 25, of Monticello
Justin Reichart, 22, of Fort Wayne
Matthew Hensley, 24, of Valparaiso
James Daniel, 30, of Valparaiso
J. Anthony Capozzoli, 26, of Greentown
Travis Springer, 21, of Decatur

St. Joseph County

Derek Scott Davey, of Berrien Springs, Mich.
James R. McManus, 35, of Fort Wayne
Matthew K. Toosley, 25, of Knox
John A. Payne, 29, of Plymouth
Steven Berry, 46, of Rockville
Brian Gladish, 35, of Montgomery

Tippecanoe County

Charles D. Fuller, 45, of Lafayette
Jimmie L. Collins, 47, of Whiteland
Stephen Schaffer, 23, of Martinsville
David Lohman, 37, of Indianapolis
Rahul L. Mannara, 33, of South Bend
Michael Hackley, 35, of Springfield, Ohio
Donald Cochran, 47, of Rushville
Jeffrey P. Taylor, 37, of Logansport
Thomas Wallace, 35, of Anderson
Mark Ciesolka, 32, of Columbus, Ohio