

Prosecutor, St. Barnabas Announce Partnership

ELIZABETH — A partnership involving law enforcement, the state's largest health care provider and educational leaders was unveiled May 24 following the signing of an agreement concerning Shaken Baby Syndrome training for all new parents in hospitals from the Saint Barnabas Health Care System.

Pointing to the picture of a young victim who died from brain injuries associated with being violently shaken, Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow described how information that will now be provided through videos, brochures and infant doll demonstrations could save lives in the future.

Ronald Del Mauro, president and chief executive officer of the Saint Barnabas Health Care System, said the agreement to have hospital staff teach new parents with state-of-the-art materials about the syndrome is being welcomed.

"With 17,500 births, over 200,000 pediatric patients and renowned maternal-child programs, the Saint Barnabas Health Care System has a great interest in the health of the youngest, most vulnerable members of our communities," Mr. Del Mauro said.

The prosecutor said he became aware of the problem reviewing the prosecution of two serious cases shortly after he took office. Autopsies conducted on the children revealed rapid acceleration and deceleration to the brain, injuries associated with shaken baby syndrome, which occurs when a young child or infant is violently shaken and severe injury occurs inside the skull.

Mr. Romankow said he invited educators and medical staff members from the five hospitals that serve Union County residents as well as the county's legislative delegation along with emergency medical response personnel from area hospitals to a conference to assess how best to address issues connected to Shaken Baby Syndrome.

"We began procedures to coordinate medical responses to the cases as well as methods for educating parents and other caregivers," Mr. Romankow said, adding that Investigations Supervisor David Hancock began a pilot program of classes taught at high schools in the county for sophomore students.

"From there, we expanded to Westfield High School where health teachers incorporated the information, including a training video and written materials, into the curriculum with the idea of going countywide," Mr. Hancock said.

Union County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carmen Centuolo said every public high school and every middle school would have shaken baby instruction so that teenagers who handle infants understand the concept and the risk of serious injury. More than 5,000 students are expected to receive the instructions.

Mr. Romankow said he used money seized from drug dealers to purchase the initial sets of demonstration infant dolls, videos and brochures but now the Saint Barnabas group has developed an updated brochure and an additional \$6,000 has been donated by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation to underwrite the cost of additional training materials.

"Experts are telling us that one infant in every 2,600 born in the United States is shaken to the point of requiring medical care," said Mr. Romankow. "It is truly remarkable to know that from this day forward, there will be shaken baby training each year throughout New Jersey for nearly 18,000 parents."

County Temporarily Changes OPRA Fax

ELIZABETH — The County of Union has announced that the fax telephone line for Open Public Records Act (OPRA) is temporarily out of service. Requests should be faxed to (908) 289-4143.



Melissa Loewinger for The Westfield Leader and The Times SAFETY NET...New Jersey Attorney General Zulima Farber discusses Internet safety during a presentation at Union County Vocational-Technical School on May 25. At right in front is Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow.

Parents Invited to Attend Internet Safety Workshop

SCOTCH PLAINS — The John H. Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains will host a computer workshop, "The Internet and Your Child," for parents to learn basics about the computer, the Internet, online dangers and tips on how to keep children and the family cyber-safe.

This free program will be held on Saturday, June 10, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the police academy, located at 1776 Raritan Road in Scotch Plains.

Using a computer, each person will learn about basic computer usage, including computer hardware and software, Windows, how to get connected to and get around the Internet and will learn how to e-mail, instant message and chat with other class members. Blogs, such as mspace.com, and newsgroups will be also be discussed.

Sergeant Andre Banks of the Union County Prosecutor's Office High-Tech Task Force and Karen Positan, Assistant Public Information Officer, will also provide a glimpse at the dark side of the Internet's dangers and risk, including child predators, sex crimes, fraud, scams, hacking, identity theft and viruses.

The focus of the workshop is on protecting children and youth from online dangers. Topics will include protecting one's privacy and blocking unwanted sites and users. Participants will search for information about themselves online, and will also

be given instructions on "what to do if this happens to you."

Because each person will be assigned to a computer, class size is limited and pre-registration is required.

To register, or for more information, call the Union County Prosecutor's Office at (908) 527-4517.

Nature Walk on Tap At Fairview Cemetery

WESTFIELD — Residents are invited to take part in a free, one-hour nature walk at Fairview Cemetery and Arboretum in Westfield on Sunday, June 25, at 2 p.m., rain or shine.

The tour will be guided by Dr. Thomas Ombrello, senior professor of the biology department at Union County College. Dr. Ombrello has taught plant and environmental science, general biology and zoology at the college for 31 years. Dr. Ombrello and his students have identified and tagged more than 60 species of trees on the Fairview property.

The walk can accommodate 50 guests and will start from the Fairview office at 1100 East Broad Street. Interested persons may call for reservations at (908) 232-0781 Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Attendees are urged to wear comfortable shoes, as there may be a bit of hill climbing.

Attorney General Stresses Internet Safety at Vo-Tech

By MELISSA LOEWINGER
Special Writing for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Attorney General Zulima Farber and Acting Education Commissioner Lucille Davy visited Union County Vocational Technical High School last Thursday to raise awareness of Internet predators and resources available to parents. The event was dubbed "Internet Safety Day."

Mrs. Farber said she concerned with Internet safety at this time of the year, saying, "Now that summer vacation is approaching, our children are going to have more time than usual. We must make sure they use it in a smart and safe way."

Noting statistics from The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Mrs. Farber said, "We are all concerned about the safety of our children, especially in areas when predators are now a threat. We are not telling them not to use the Internet, just to use it safely. Thirty million children in the U.S. use the Internet today. Surveys show that one in five of those children received unwanted sexual invitations. This is a very troubling set of statistics. We must give them an awareness of the dangers that they face. The Internet is a wonderful tool for learning and exploring the world, but it can also be a dangerous place for the unaware," Mrs. Farber said.

Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow praised the attorney general. "I've seen the attorney general more in the past hundred days than I've seen any of the prior attorney generals in the four years I have been prosecutor. She regularly attends all of the prosecutor's meetings."

Detectives Greg Masterson, a member of the High Tech Task Force in the Union County Prosecutor's Office, and Chuck Allen and Deniele DeBoer of the New Jersey State Police Cyber-Crimes Unit gave a slide show presentation on how parents could protect their children in their Internet usage.

Mr. Masterson, who was a state trooper for 11 years, listed several triggers that parents could use to identify potential problems: a child having excessive unwanted e-mail, always being in a room with a computer, on the computer at late hours, spending the night over a friend's house and a child's friend using your computer with their own account. He stressed the point that if parents are paying for their child's Internet account, then they are liable for their child's actions on the Internet.

Mr. Masterson said the earlier children start to learn about Internet safety

measures, the better. When one parent inquired as to what age she should begin to enforce safe Internet habits on her children, he said, "We have had tremendous success with elementary and middle school children. Teenagers know everything and are invincible and tend not to listen as much."

Yussuf Ali, a parent of three children, said he was concerned about monitoring the people his children were chatting with on the Internet. He asked, "Is there a way I can find out exactly who that person on their buddy list is?" Mr. Masterson suggested that he communicate with the persons over the Internet and ask questions to validate identities.

The detectives familiarized parents with the concept of social networking websites, putting special emphasis on MySpace.com, presently the most popular site with more than 57 million members nationwide. In a media advisory issued from the office of the attorney general, it states that this site is also "a favorite of child predators, con artists and cyber bullies, according to law enforcement officials and computer safety experts."

Ms. DeBoer ran the audience through an example MySpace account, and said, "Your kids spend a lot of time creating these things. Even some gangs have made accounts. It's good for law enforcers because they can get a lot of information out of it, but at the same time they are soliciting new members."

She proceeded to present the account of a child predator who formed an online identity under a different name and showed how easy it is for Internet stalkers to find children just by gathering seemingly insignificant personal details through profiles on buddy lists (lists of Internet contacts). Free Internet features such as Google Earth allow anyone access to aerial views of a house with its specific location.

Karen Langer, a Scotch Plains resident and parent of a Union County Magnet High School student, said she thought the presentation was effective. "I thought the speakers were very good. I was impressed with how seriously they take the subject. I am going to have a little discussion with my children when I get home."

Acting Education Commissioner Lucille Davy said, "Generally we hope that parents will pay attention to what their children are doing on the Internet and make sure that they're talking to them."

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