

10-6-1998

## Cybercrimes Attorney to Address Hidden Hazards to Children on the Internet

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### Recommended Citation

"Cybercrimes Attorney to Address Hidden Hazards to Children on the Internet" (1998). *News Releases*. 8986.  
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*(Editor's Note: Frank Cona and Mike Palage will be available to meet with reporters between 11 a.m. and noon on Friday, Oct. 16, in the Mathias H. Heck Courtroom in Joseph E. Keller Hall on campus. The speech starts at noon.)*

**CYBERCRIMES ATTORNEY TO ADDRESS  
HIDDEN HAZARDS TO CHILDREN ON THE INTERNET**

DAYTON, Ohio — When University of Dayton law student Hazel Rountree taught a recent Internet safety workshop at an after-school youth program at Omega Baptist Church, she was surprised to learn how unsuspecting children are about the risks of surfing the Web.

"Children know a lot about computers, but they're so innocent about the potential dangers," said Rountree, who will earn a law degree next spring after spending 14 years as a counselor and administrator at Sinclair Community College. "They're worried about people stealing their games off the computer. Not one student mentioned abduction or luring as dangers."

That's one reason why Rountree has spearheaded an effort to bring two nationally known cybercrimes experts to campus to address "Cybercrimes Against Children on the Information Superhighway." Frank A. Cona and Michael D. Palage, intellectual property attorneys and Internet consultants, will speak at noon on Friday, Oct. 16, in the Mathias Heck Courtroom in Joseph E. Keller Hall on campus. The presentation is free and open to the public.

Cona and Palage are founders of IP Warehouse Inc., a technology law consulting and service company in Philadelphia, and adjunct professors at Drexel University, where they teach a "Critical Issues in Cyberspace" course. They have written and spoken extensively on the legal, technological and social issues surrounding the Internet.

Headlines heralding online dangers are popping up with more regularity in the press. Police arrest three 13-year-olds after school officials hear rumors the eighth graders were planning to blow up the school. They learned how to make a bomb from the Internet, according to a report in the *Syracuse Herald-Journal*. A 35-year-old man is convicted in Sacramento of statutory rape after luring a 15-year-old girl from Florida to California 10 days after meeting her on the Internet. Children can access virtual casinos and pornography on the Web.

In an article published online and presented at a 1997 workshop at Drexel University, Cona and Palage provide parents with an "online safety check list." Among their tips:

- Quit viewing the computer as an electronic babysitter and monitor online activities. Establish proper guidelines for use of the computer.

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- Place computers with online access in high-traffic areas, such as a recreation room or den.
- Teach children never to give out personal information such as a home address, telephone number, age, picture or school without parental consent.
- Establish and maintain an open dialogue with children and instruct them how to react when confronted with offensive, obscene or improper material. Know how to document and report obscene or other illegal material.
- Investigate your access provider to see if it offers filtering options. If not, install filtering software.
- Don't believe everything you read, see or hear online.
- Never respond to threatening or abusive postings.
- Never allow children to arrange to meet someone without arranging for a chaperone.
- Beware of people who mask their identity through anonymous e-mail messages.
- If necessary, restrict Internet access.

"Crimes relating to Internet usage are on the rise, and sadly there's been a significant increase in sexual predators victimizing children using the Internet," said Rountree, who is attempting to create a clearinghouse of information about child protection issues in cyberspace. "Many adults and children are unaware of the prevalence of sexual predators on the Internet. Likewise, many Internet users are unfamiliar with the latest technology available to address safety issues."

In many cases, children are more computer-savvy than their parents. "Many parents will buy some kind of technology to block material on the Internet, but only a minority of them actually install the filters," Rountree said.

The presentation is sponsored by a cybercrimes seminar — a new University of Dayton course taught online by law professor Susan Brenner — and a number of UD law student organizations, including the Student Bar Association, Black Law Student Association, Criminal Law Alliance, Computer Law Association, Intellectual Property Law Society and the legal honor fraternity Phi Delta Phi.

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For media interviews, contact **Hazel Rountree** at [rountrhd@flyernet.udayton.edu](mailto:rountrhd@flyernet.udayton.edu), **Frank A. Cona** at (610) 845-2020 or [fcona@ipwarehouse.com](mailto:fcona@ipwarehouse.com) and **Susan Brenner** at (937) 229-2929 or [brenner@udayton.edu](mailto:brenner@udayton.edu). The article can be found at [http://www.ipwarehouse.com/IP\\_Library/general\\_articles/child\\_safety.html](http://www.ipwarehouse.com/IP_Library/general_articles/child_safety.html).