



Department of Justice
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**FORMER SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHER SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR POSSESSING AND RECEIVING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – John Charles Wellman, 68, of Bluefield, West Virginia was sentenced yesterday by United States District Judge Thomas E. Johnston to 25 years in prison followed by a lifetime term of supervised release. Wellman was previously found guilty by a jury in January 2009 of receiving and possession child pornography, and receiving child pornography while being required to register as a sex offender.

On May 3, 2007, members of the West Virginia State Police executed a search warrant at Wellman's residence following an investigation of Wellman for distributing and collecting child pornography. The search yielded several computers, CDs, DVDs and floppy disks, and 38 hard drives, all containing images and videos depicting the graphic sexual abuse of children. Troopers also found printed images of child pornography believed to have been taken by Wellman, in addition to children's clothing, toys and professional photography equipment. Wellman was previously employed as a photographer who took class pictures for schools in the Bluefield area.

During the investigation, troopers learned that Wellman had been previously convicted of the first degree sexual abuse of a six-year-old boy. As a result, Wellman was required to register as a sex offender. However, he failed to do so.

Subsequently, Wellman admitted he had been collecting child pornography for 30 years. A forensic examination of the computer equipment revealed that Wellman was using a peer-to-peer file sharing program, among other programs, to download child pornography from the Internet. Wellman's collection included thousands of images and hundreds of videos depicting the graphic sexual abuse of children. These images and videos, many depicting children under the age of 12 years, depict sadistic and masochistic conduct. Many of the images and videos depict known children who have been identified by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The West Virginia State Police, Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Karen B. Schommer handled the prosecution.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about cases and related activities please visit www.usdoj.gov/usao/wvs and www.projectsafecchildhood.gov/.

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