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**SUMMERSVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

CHARLESTON, W. Va. – Aaron Shane Ballew, 33, of Summersville, West Virginia, pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge Thomas E. Johnston to possessing child pornography. Ballew, who is scheduled to be sentenced on January 5, 2011, faces up to 10 years in prison and a lifetime term of supervised release.

According to court documents, Ballew made contact in an online chat room with an undercover agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Using a peer-to-peer file sharing program, Ballew shared with the agent thousands of pictures and videos depicting children engaged in sexually explicit activity. Many of the images contained children under twelve years old. The FBI subsequently executed a search warrant at Ballew's residence in Summersville on March 1, 2010. At that time, the FBI seized Ballew's home computer, CDs and DVDs, which contained thousands of images depicting child pornography.

Assistant United States Attorney Thomas C. Ryan is handling the prosecution.

This case is being 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.projectsafefchildhood.gov/.

Also in Charleston, Sharon Kay Hanna, 57, of Nettie, West Virginia, pleaded guilty last week before Judge Johnston to maintaining a residence for the purpose of distributing oxycodone. Hanna faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine when she is sentenced on December 9, 2010.

The conviction stems from a long-term investigation conducted by the Central West Virginia Drug Task Force of drug trafficking in and around Nicholas County, West Virginia. Confidential informants working with Task Force agents made drug purchases from Hanna, Jeremy Hanna, Terry Hughes and others. The investigation revealed that from early 2007 until January 2008, Hanna used her Nicholas County residence to distribute and store controlled substances. Hanna also allowed others to abuse controlled substances in her home. Jeremy Hanna and Terry Hughes were previously convicted for their roles in the drug trafficking organization.

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