

Beat: News

Spokane Valley Volleyball Coach Sentenced to 60 Months in Federal Prison

For Child Pornography Offense

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USPA NEWS - United States District Judge Thomas O. Rice sentenced Richard Dale Wright, 50, of Spokane, Washington, to 60 months in federal custody for downloading images of child pornography. Judge Rice ordered Wright to be taken into immediate custody, and also ordered him to serve the remainder of his life on federal supervision after he is released from prison. Wright pleaded guilty earlier this year to Receipt of Child Pornography.

According to court documents, an undercover FBI Special Agent went online in the Spring of 2019 to identify people in the Spokane community who were sharing large volumes of known or suspected child pornography. The agent downloaded a number of child pornography files from Wright's computer, and a subsequent search warrant at his residence in Spokane Valley resulted in the seizure of digital devices containing images and videos of child pornography dating back to 2017. Wright had been a girls' volleyball coach in Spokane and the Spokane Valley, including at Lewis & Clark High School, and with Apex, a club youth volleyball program for which Wright served as the director. He was also on the Board of Directors for the Evergreen Region Volleyball Association. Although the ages of the victims depicted in Wright's child pornography collection were consistent with the volleyball players he coached, FBI was not able to positively identify any of Wright's former players in the child pornography images on his digital devices.

"It is deeply troubling that a coach, entrusted with the safety of teenage – and younger – girls, engaged in child pornography conduct that demonstrated his sexual interest in girls that age," said Vanessa R. Waldref, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington. "It is a relief that the FBI did not recover evidence that Mr. Wright recorded child pornography images or videos of any of the players he coached. Today's sentence nevertheless serves as a clarion call to anyone who would endanger or exploit children in the Eastern District or elsewhere: law enforcement is actively investigating your online conduct, and the consequences for engaging in child exploitation are severe."

"As a coach and community role model, Mr. Wright held a position of trust and he should be held to a high standard of conduct," said Donald M. Voiret, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Seattle Field Office. "Instead, he possessed hundreds of images that revictimize innocent children every time their abuse is viewed. I commend the investigators and prosecutors who vigilantly protect our youth."

This case was pursued as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the United States Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals, who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. The Project Safe Childhood Initiative ("PSC") has five major components:

Integrated federal, state, and local efforts to investigate and prosecute child exploitation cases, and to identify and rescue children;

Participation of PSC partners in coordinated national initiatives;

Increased federal enforcement in child pornography and enticement cases;

Training of federal, state, and local law enforcement agents; and

Community awareness and educational programs.

For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc. For information about internet safety education, please visit www.usdoj.gov/psc and click on the tab "resources."

This case was investigated by the Spokane Resident Office of the FBI. The case was prosecuted by David M. Herzog, Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington.

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Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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