

Anti-porn group targets on-line activities

Modem can bring smut home to kids

By Cheryl Wetzstein
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Armed with indecent computer-generated photographs and lists of "sex groups" children can access by computer, an anti-pornography group and several senators pledged to throw up legal roadblocks in the information superhighway.

Computer pornography is an insidious threat to children, Donna Rice Hughes, spokeswoman for Enough Is Enough, a Fairfax County-based group dedicated to "breaking pornography's chain of abuse," said at a leadership luncheon yesterday.

"A child with a computer and a modem can download the most vile and perverse, often violent, hard-core pornography ever produced," Mrs. Hughes said. Computer porn is proliferating because it is a low-risk, speedy and easy way of transmission, she said, reading a list of sex-related Usenet groups involving corpses, animals, children, excretory functions and violence that are accessible free.

Computers "offer families and children fantastic opportunities to learn, enrich and enhance their lives," Sen. Jim Exon, Nebraska Democrat, told the Enough Is Enough gathering. But "very real dangers lurk behind the bright flicker of the computer screens. Some of the most explicit, vile and unnerving sexual images, discussions and stories are open, available and transmitted to children."

Mr. Exon has introduced legislation, adopted as an amendment to the telecommunications bill in the Senate, that would prohibit "telephones, computers and other telecommunications devices to distribute obscenity, provide minors with indecent pornographic material or be used to harass individuals."

A Republican bill introduced yesterday by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas and



Photo by Karen Ballard/The Washington Times

Women at Enough Is Enough's luncheon examine examples of what they fear children will find on the Internet.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa would make it a federal crime to knowingly or recklessly transmit indecent pornography to minors over computer networks, including electronic bulletin boards.

The bill also would make it a crime for an on-line service that permits users to access electronic bulletin boards to willfully permit adults to transmit indecent pornography to minors.

"We all share a common goal: to stop the coarsening of our culture," Mr. Dole said, adding that his recent remarks about the entertainment industry weren't a call for censorship, but a challenge "to help protect the innocence of children."

Promising to "name names" when the facts are in, Mr. Dole said he will continue to criticize those who profit from the victimization and debasement of women and children.

At yesterday's event in the Russell Senate Office Building, 16-year-old Ashley told how she was

lured into a world of drugs, sex and violence by boys and men involved with pornography.

Teen-agers are often used in photo sessions, the Florida teen said, describing how her life became so degraded and hopeless that she "didn't want to live anymore."

Now part of the House of Hope in Orlando, Fla., a nonprofit group dedicated to helping runaway, thrown-away and abused teens, Ashley said she is "one of the lucky ones" who escaped.

"Pornography is a big deal," she tearfully said. "Pornography destroyed my life. It destroyed everything I ever had."

"What kind of country will we have down the road when we have a generation that has used and consumed this kind of material?" Enough Is Enough President Dee Jepsen said.

Mrs. Jepsen, wife of former Iowa Sen. Roger Jepsen, urged parents and others to get involved

in the anti-pornography effort even though it's "distasteful."

Not only is pornography addictive, but it is frequently a factor in child abuse, molestation, incest and other sexual crimes, Mrs. Jepsen said.

The group recommends that parents with home computers:

- Keep the computer in a public area of the house, not in a den or bedroom.

- Learn systems well enough to monitor the children.

- Watch for computer files that end in "GIF" or "JPG." These are picture files and could contain pornography.

- Monitor "chat" or "CB" sections where people talk anonymously.

- Complain to on-line services that offer pornography.

- Use on-line services that offer controls or "locks" on areas.

- Tell your child never to give out his real name, address or phone number.

CULTURE, et cetera

The Washington Times