

NEWS RELEASE



Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
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Luis A. Valentin, Prosecutor

LONG BRANCH MAN ARRESTED FOR POSSESSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

On March 8, 2010, Michael Richards, 43, of Long Branch, N.J., was arrested by Detectives from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office and charged with two counts of second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child and one count of fourth degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child. The charges result from an investigation which was conducted by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office. The investigation revealed that Richards distributed an image of child pornography on two occasions, and also that he possessed images of child pornography.

The Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's investigation followed a referral from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ("N.C.M.E.C.") and the New Jersey Internet Crimes Against Children ("I.C.A.C.") Task Force. In December of 2009, N.C.M.E.C. received information that an email had been transmitted across the America Online network and that the email contained an embedded and/or attached file which contained an image of child pornography. The investigation conducted by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office revealed that the email was sent from an email account belonging to Richards.

The investigation led to a lawful search of Richard's residence on March 8, 2010, and the lawful seizure of two computers from Richards' residence. A preliminary search of the two computers revealed that one of them contained images of child pornography. The investigation additionally confirmed that Richards emailed an image of child pornography using a different account on February 3, 2010.

Richards is being held at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of \$100,000 bail. Conditions of Richards' bail prohibit him from using the Internet or having contact with children who are less than 18 years of age.

Under New Jersey law, the unlawful possession and distribution of images of child pornography is prohibited by the Endangering the Welfare of a Child statute. If the child pornography is merely unlawfully possessed, the Endangering the Welfare of a Child charge is a fourth degree crime. If the child pornography is unlawfully distributed, the Endangering the Welfare of a Child charge is a second degree crime. If convicted of second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Richards faces a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to a 10 year State Prison term. If convicted of fourth degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Richards faces a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to an 18 month term of imprisonment.

Monmouth County Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin stated, "Possessing and trafficking in child pornography is an affront to civilized peoples everywhere. The unfortunate children depicted in child pornography images not only have to endure the mental and physical scars of their abuse, but they also must live with the knowledge that the horrible acts they were subjected to were memorialized and then disseminated on the Internet for the sexual gratification of others. Those who possess and distribute these images re-victimize the innocent and enable the market for this insidious material to continue to exist."

Despite these charges, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and State law.

The case is assigned to Assistant Monmouth County Prosecutor Kevin M. Clark, Director of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Computer Crimes Unit.

Released: March 9, 2010