

# NEWS RELEASE

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**Luis A. Valentin, Prosecutor**

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## **JOINT INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN HOWELL MAN'S ARREST ON MULTIPLE CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

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On April 20, 2010, Detectives from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office arrested Paul DeSantis, 53, of Howell Township, N.J., and charged him with six counts of fourth degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child and six counts of second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child. The charges are the result of an investigation which was conducted by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Computer Crimes Unit and other agencies.

This investigation began when a Detective with the Vermont Internet Crimes Against Children ("I.C.A.C.") Task Force discovered that several images of child pornography had been posted to a social networking website from an account registered to an individual located in Howell Township. The investigation was then referred to the New Jersey I.C.A.C. Task Force, which is overseen by the New Jersey State Police. Because the registered account holder was located in Howell Township, the New Jersey State Police, in turn, referred the matter to the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, which is an I.C.A.C. affiliate agency. During the ensuing investigation, the Computer Crimes Unit of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office confirmed that images and a video were uploaded from a computer located in the DeSantis residence.

A lawful search of DeSantis' residence was conducted on April 20, 2010, by members of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, Howell Township Police Department, New Jersey State Police, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. The search resulted in the lawful seizure of several computers and other computer-related items.

DeSantis was committed to the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of \$102,500.00 bail which was set by Monmouth County Superior Court Judge Anthony J. Mellaci, Jr. Conditions of DeSantis' bail include a prohibition against 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 and videos 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, DeSantis 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, DeSantis faces a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to an 18 month term of imprisonment. If convicted of second degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, DeSantis will be subject to the registration requirements of Megan's Law.**

**Monmouth County Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin stated, "The arrest of DeSantis demonstrates the effectiveness and value of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force in combating the online exploitation of vulnerable children. The arrest was the result of the combined effort of federal, state, county and local agencies working cooperatively in concert with one another."**

**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. Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of DeSantis.**

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