

## **Who Abuses our Children?**

By Bright Tomorrows Staff

Recently one of our Southeastern Idaho communities was faced with the horrible truth that their school principal was accused of molesting children. We often have the false sense of security that someone's position in our community makes them safe or trustworthy with children. We have background checks that come up clean giving us the false belief that this person has no chance of hurting children.

It is important to recognize red flags that may indicate someone is a threat to our children. It is often someone who:

- Is well known and liked by you and your child, such as a parent, step-parent, relative, family friend, teacher, clergyman, baby-sitter, or anyone your child(ren) may come into contact with.
- Is likely to be stable, employed, and a respected member of the community.
- Purposely seeks positions or activities that give them easy access to your child(ren).
- Pays attention to your child, making them feel special.
- Isolates your child by involving them in fun activities so they can be together, alone.
- Is knowledgeable about what kids like i.e. music, clothing, video games, language, etc. and is often seen as "cool."
- Is very good at manipulating children, increasing the likelihood that the child will protect the offender.
- Takes advantage of your child's natural curiosity about sex by testing the waters with "dirty" jokes, pornography, and/or sexual "games."
- Will even make comments like, "Anyone who molests a child should be shot!"

What these facts tell us is that all parents, caretakers and community members must educate themselves about sexual abuse and child molesters in order to improve their ability to protect children. It is important for people to understand how "normal" child molesters may seem and how easily they can gain access to children, isolate them and manipulate them into thinking that the abuse is okay. To increase education and awareness, Bright Tomorrows Child Advocacy Center is offering a prevention training program called Stewards of Children this Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup> from 5:30pm-8:00pm. To register, call 208-234-2646. For more information, go to [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org), [www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org), or [www.brightcac.org](http://www.brightcac.org).