

Date: Apr 23, 2011; Section: Front Page; Page: A1

# Protecting children from sex offenders

**BY TAMMY SCARDINO**

[tscardino@journalnet.com](mailto:tscardino@journalnet.com)

**BOISE** — Tell your children that you love them often. If you don't, someone else will, and they might not have their best interests at heart.

That is the most compelling message Bannock County Lt. Toni Vollmer brought home with her after attending a two-day work conference on monitoring and tracking sex offenders that was held in Boise earlier this week.

In all, 225 professionals representing 65 different agencies attended the first annual Idaho State Offender Watch Conference.

"I think people need to know that most registered sex offenders are not 17- or 19-year-olds who made a mistake in their past who were charged with statutory rape for having sex with their high school sweetheart," Vollmer said. "Statistics show most of the registered sex offenders have committed crimes against children."

The newly formed Idaho Sex Offender Watch Task Force comprises agencies within the boundaries of Ada, Bannock and Canyon counties.

Upon formation, the group successfully vied for a federal grant worth nearly \$500,000.

A portion of the money will be used to set up a statewide database to help law enforcement agents track the movement of registered sex offenders.

There are approximately 230 registered sex offenders in Bannock County.

"I'm not trying to diminish the severity of other criminal acts, but sex offenders ruin people's lives," said U.S. Marshall Brian Underwood, who organized the conference. "In general, these people will do everything in their power to get to children, and we have an obligation to protect them."

Bannock County Prosecutor Mark Hiedeman gained a better understanding of how to recognize the behavior of a repeat sex offender.

"I think it opened my eyes as a prosecutor to the lack of knowledge we have on the number of victims child molesters may have," Hiedeman said.

To find out if a sex offender lives in your neighborhood or to sign up for email alerts log on to [www.icrimewatch.net](http://www.icrimewatch.net).