



Goshen Man Charged with Possessing a Sexual Performance by a Child

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced that on November 21, 2023 James Harris, age 71, of Goshen, was arrested by the Village of Goshen Police Department and charged with Possessing a Sexual Performance by a Child. Under New York State bail reform laws passed in 2019, the offense charged is not bail eligible and therefore the defendant was issued a desk appearance ticket returnable for a later date.

As alleged by the police, Harris traded online in child pornography, including videos and pictures of children engaged in sexual activity with adults. This activity was flagged by the Orange County District Attorney's Office Digital Forensics Unit ("DFU") through the use of specialized investigative techniques that identified the transfer of these files. Once the DFU identified the activity, they worked with the Village of Goshen Police Department to locate the source of the material. A judicially-authorized search warrant was executed at Harris's residence where law enforcement officers seized cellular telephones, tablets and computers which, after a forensic examination, were found to contain child pornography.

The collaborative investigation which led to the arrest involved not only the DFU but also the Village of Goshen Police Department because local agencies in these types of investigations will provide for a more thorough investigation due to the intimate knowledge of their population while the DFU can provide the required technical and investigative expertise for these types of investigations. Also assisting in the investigation and arrest were the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigations unit and their electronic sniffing dog that was used during the search warrant execution.

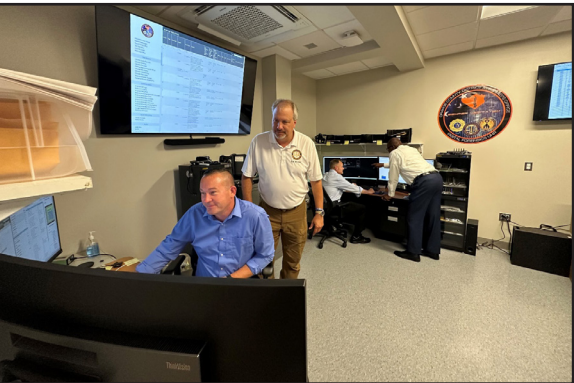
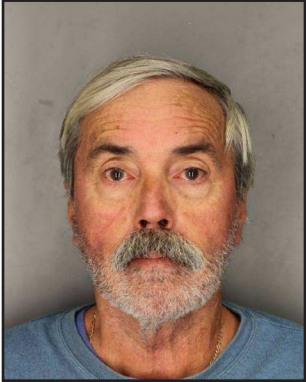
The DFU, which was created in July, 2023, is dedicated to searching for and analyzing digital evidence retrieved from devices such as cellular telephones, computers and vehicles that have been taken into evidence by police agencies throughout Orange County. The unit is patterned after similar units that exist in the Manhattan and Bronx County District Attorney's Offices. In addition to searching devices already in evidence, the unit's staff will also use their extensive experience to aid other Orange County police agencies by: assisting at crime scenes; conducting child exploitation investigations; and, by conducting specialized video DVR extractions. The DFU is led by a Senior Investigator and staffed by two additional full time District Attorney Investigators who collectively have more than 80 years of law enforcement experience and 1500 hours of specialized training in digital forensics and child exploitation investigations.

The DFU has also registered as an affiliate of the New York State Internet Crimes against Children Task Force (ICAC). The DFU has entered into partnerships with ICAC on a New York State and National level to effectively investigate these horrendous crimes in Orange County and to assist local law enforcement partners with ICAC investigations within their jurisdictions.

"Children are the most vulnerable and innocent of victims," said District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "It requires the coordinated and dedicated efforts of law enforcement to track down child pornography that is possessed and disseminated in our community. I know that the resources allocated to the DFU are vital to assisting our local law enforcement partners in these complicated investigations. Those who choose to engage in this behavior should take heed that we will not cease in our pursuit of these crimes."

Police implore anyone with information related to this case, or with any other relevant information related to the defendant, to come forward and please call the Village of Goshen Police Department at 845-294-7988. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Purcell.

A criminal charge is merely an allegation by the police that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State of New York's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



We All Deserve Dignity

By Cooper Drummond

On Monday, November 6th, State Senators Pete Harkham and Rob Rollison spoke at CP Unlimited in Brewster to introduce the Travelling with Dignity Act.

"This will provide for adult changing rooms to be placed within an enclosed and discreet restroom facility or other similar private facility and be made available to persons with disabilities, seniors, and of course, our veterans and heroes who come back and other individuals," said Harkham, a Democrat of the 40th District. "Specifically, we are talking about commercial places of public amusement, such as sports arenas, theaters, amusement parks, that can serve over 2500 people... We are also talking about other public buildings, libraries and of course rest areas."

The bill would require commercial places that are built on or after January 1st, 2024 to have at least one adult changing room installed. Most of the existing places would have to renovate for a changing room by January 1st, 2027. The exceptions are museums and public libraries being required to add one by January 1st, 2029 and amusement parks having to do the same by January 1st, 2031.

"We've all seen family changing facilities with changing tables for young people up to say 50-60 pounds, but there is nothing for adult changing facilities... That is just not right," said Harkham.

"As the county seat and geographically the center of Orange County, this Act promises that the Goshen community and recreational venues will be part of that inclusion, which is the hallmark of the caring and supportive community that INSPIRE believes is true of Goshen," said Jeanne T. Herbert, the President of Inspire, a Goshen-headquartered non-profit with locations in Newburgh, Goshen and Monroe. They provide individual and family-centered supports to people with cerebral palsy and other challenges, such as preschool special education and related therapies, disability supports, recreational and respite programs, and family support services.

About a year ago, disability advocates rallied at the State Capitol Building in Albany in support of the issue. "(CP Unlimited Hudson Valley Executive Director) Penny Pagliaro said we could have had twice as many people here. But they could not travel. I pressed her further, 'why couldn't they travel?' They cannot go beyond two hours without having access to an adult changing facility," said Harkham.

"If I don't get changed, then I can't do it and I got to go home," said Betty Williams, who receives care at CP unlimited and was unable to attend the rallies. "I need a changing table every two hours."

Harkham said "he was aghast to realize the capitol in New York State does not have adult changing facilities."

"When individuals of whatever ability have the opportunity to do things that is important for them, it's important for all of us," said Rollison, a Republican of the 40th District and former Mayor of Poughkeepsie. "It's also an important validation of the spaces that I get to travel to."

Bipartisan

Four states have done this already: California, Michigan, Arizona and Pennsylvania. "This is not a new concept. This is something that we can do here in New York," said Harkham, who foresees no trouble getting a bipartisan vote.

"Access to these facilities will make it possible for these individuals to travel to locations outside their homes, to participate in vocational and recreational activities, and to be a part of the wider social and political community. A truly inclusive society must minimize barriers to participation and Inspire applauds this Act," said Herbert.



Just a few pictures of the groups attending the rally in Albany earlier this month drawing attention to the "Traveling with Dignity" movement.

