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Police, administration investigate anonymous child pornography Snapchat account

NYAH PHENGSIITHY

Once an image is published on an application, its web trail can never truly be erased. It wasn't until recently that the recovery of images and applications was used in our school after students reported nude pictures of both males and females on an anonymous Snapchat account, a social media platform known for holding pictures that disappear after opening.

Students who have been affected reported that their nude pictures were posted to the account without their knowledge and consent. Those involved could potentially be charged for spreading child pornography. The creation of the account has now involved law enforcement, where detective and Task Force Worker for Internet Crimes Against Children, Greg Miller, has been working with the

HHS administration to find who is behind the account. Miller works predominantly with internet and juveniles crimes, seeing multiple cases of sextortion and exploiting of negative images on social media, whether they deal with nudity, drinking or drug use.

"Just by deleting the image, it doesn't get rid of the problem... If those images get in the hands of the wrong people, bad things can happen. I know that sounds like common sense, but the unfortunate thing is that it continues," Miller said. "You send an image and you now have no control on where it goes. The boyfriend becomes the ex-boyfriend, the friend becomes the ex-friend and then it trickles down."

This account was brought to principal Cynthia Prieto's attention when three students reported the problem to her and a counselor within the same half hour. The situation immediately required

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”

-Greg Miller

Prieto to contact parents and notify the police. Prieto sees all of this as an opportunity to be a learning experience for students, rather than a pity talk.

"Because I'm not their parent, there's no judgment. [They're] not going to get into trouble. I can help them understand that their

parent is going to have a reaction. Ultimately, [parents are] going to want to protect their kid," Prieto said.

If underage, taking a nude image of yourself and sending it is illegal. It's not illegal because it's embarrassing, but because it's child pornography. School resource officer Tony Hermes stresses the importance of how inappropriate material on social media can cause a domino effect on the people involved.

"It's extremely disruptive when you have images floating around and people huddle in a corner watching videos, watching whatever's out there... That leads to fights, that leads to bullying, that leads to someone not comfortable coming to school so they start skipping... It's a downhill slide," Hermes said.

According to Miller, those who elevate this issue are the ones who post, screenshots or share inap-

propriate content. Once an image is posted onto a public social media platform, those who are witnesses are required to report it to the police or school administration for the spread of child pornography. In this situation, investigations are more focused on finding the account creator, rather than going after the victim who sent the picture.

"We are not out to get [students who sent nudes] in trouble. This can really affect someone's life and we are out here to help them. It's the bullying [and] embarrassment. We have people thinking about self-harming, and then suicide, all from a mistake," Miller said.

Investigations are currently underway to find the creators behind the account. This means going through the phones of victims, dealing with families and contact-

See NUDES page A2

Chief English aims for educational involvement

NOAH SIDERHURST

After 28 years with the Richmond Police Department (RPD), Harrisonburg's new police chief, Eric English, doesn't think there's a lot that can surprise him.

"[Harrisonburg] is very similar [to Richmond] diversity wise," English said. "I will say the community support here is just as strong as the community support we had in Richmond, maybe even stronger. The issues you deal with in Harrisonburg are much different than

the issues you deal with in Richmond crime wise. Here you have a very strong part of the community that pushes restorative justice, and while that's pushed in Richmond, I'd say that's much stronger here."

English's overall goal is the same as it's always been.

"One, we have to be more engaged with our community. We have to get to know individuals in our community more on a one-on-one basis than just when we respond to a call for

See ENGLISH page A2

BSU hosts third annual school talent show, showcases school's flair

SAMANTHA LITTLE

With acts ranging from dance routines to original song and poem compositions, the third annual Black Student Union (BSU) talent show took to the stage Dec. 6 to showcase the wide array of talent found amongst the student body.

Senior Glorious Njoroge, a member of BSU and one of the event managers for the talent show, found that it was a beneficial way to not only display student talent, but to also represent the diversity found within BSU.

"I think that it's a great place because a lot of people don't get the chance to really show their talent in the musical or other activities. The talent show allows a person to do whatever they want and show how creative they can really be," Njoroge said. "Also, it was a way for people to be introduced to BSU and what we do as a group of different nationalities and not just Black or African American."



STOMP IT OUT.

Step team members from JMU's chapter of Black fraternity Alpha Theta Alpha perform as special guests at the BSU talent show.

PHOTO BY SAM HEIE

After going through a simple auditioning process, twelve acts were chosen to perform in the show. It featured a board of judges, which was comprised of Karen Thomas and staff members Aamir Cobb, Nicholas Zim-

merman, David Shenk and Moses Tinsley.

Second-place recipient Project END, made up of sophomores Esther Manson, Nicole Mayorga, and

See TALENT page A2

