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UNH and Sen. Gregg Mark Research Center's Fifth Anniversary

By Erika Mantz
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DURHAM, N.H. -- U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) visited the University of New Hampshire today to mark the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC). The center has received national recognition for bringing attention to child victimization through its studies of missing children, dangers on the Internet, and the impact of the justice system on child victims.

Sen. Gregg has secured more than $9 million over a five-year period for the center's programs through his position as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee in charge of the U.S. Department of Justice.

"There is no greater responsibility we have as a society and a government than to keep our children safe, and the center is providing the knowledge necessary to combat those who wish to harm children," Gregg said. "Over the last five years, the center has established itself as a premier facility for uncovering and addressing the victimization of New Hampshire's youth, particularly those who prey on young people over the Internet. I have supported the center for the past five years because of the strong mission it has, and because it is really bringing about significant results."

The director of the center, David Finkelhor, thanked the senator for his efforts on behalf of juvenile victims, and said, "the senator's national leadership on this issue has had a very positive impact."

Finkelhor said research done by the CCRC shows that there have been recent declines nationally in sexual
assault, sexual abuse, homicide, and other crimes against children, as well as reductions in missing children and runaways. He noted that this development has been overshadowed by publicity surrounding a number of recent serious crimes. "This illustrates why we need good data and thorough analysis, so that we make sound decisions that do the most to strengthen these encouraging developments," Finkelhor said.

The overall goal of the CCRC has been to provide high-quality research and policy analysis to the public, policymakers, and professionals in law enforcement and child welfare. One of the center's main accomplishments has been to foster a U.S. Department of Justice publication series, "Crimes Against Children."

CCRC staff have authored 11 of these widely disseminated bulletins on topics such as kidnapping of juveniles, crimes against children by babysitters, and child abuse reported to police. Several more bulletins are in production, including ones on child pornography, juvenile victims of hate crimes, and juvenile victims of intimate partner violence.

The CCRC also has undertaken landmark studies on Internet crimes against children, child neglect, children's advocacy centers, and the justice system's response to juvenile victims. In October, Finkelhor was invited to the White House to present the findings of the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children, on which the CCRC collaborated.

The CCRC also has been sponsoring annual conferences for researchers from around the world to come to New Hampshire to discuss issues related to child victimization. This summer's conference, with its highlight on clergy abuse, brought 300 researchers to Portsmouth.

In addition to its national and international activities, the CCRC has been active in statewide and regional policy issues. The CCRC is conducting evaluations of abuser treatment programs for the New Hampshire Department of Children, Youth and Families, and Finkelhor served on the Boston Archdiocese's Commission for the Protection of Children.
Retiring Portsmouth Police Chief Brad Russ will be affiliated with the CCRC as of January, conducting national training of law enforcement officials concerning Internet crimes against children. He will join former N.H. Assistant Attorney General Charles Putnam, who is currently working at the CCRC to help better protect child victims from the impact of publicity surrounding their cases.

"The university is fortunate and proud to have such high-quality and prominent research being carried out here on such important topics of interest to parents, children, and the community at large," UNH President Ann Weaver Hart said.

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