



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Trafficking

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ly two dozen attorneys general asking that the adult services site be taken down.

“Traffickers who exploit runaways and other disadvantaged kids shouldn’t be provided with a powerful online clearinghouse,” McKenna said. “The only way for Backpage.com to completely stop child sex trafficking on its site is to take down adult services advertisements altogether and take aggressive steps to be sure such ads don’t surface elsewhere on the site.”

McKenna added that kids aren’t capable, legally or otherwise, to consent to be sold for sex. And regardless of a prostitute’s age, it’s difficult to know whether the person advertised is being coerced.

In many cases involving human trafficking on Backpage.com, law enforcement finds that minors are, in fact, often coerced. Prosecutors in Benton County, Wash., are handling a case in which teen girls say they were threatened and extorted by two adults who marketed them on Backpage.com. One of the adults rented a hotel room in Kennewick and forced the girls to have sex with men who answered the online ads, for which Backpage.com charges \$1 and up.

Backpage.com, owned by Village Voice Media, LLC, is the top provider of “adult services” advertisements. The multimedia company, which owns 13 weekly newspapers in the United States including the Seattle Weekly, admits its involvement in advertising illegal services. In a meeting with staff at the Washington State Attorney General’s Office, Village Voice board member Don Moon readily acknowledged prostitution ads appear on the Web site. And in a June 29 article published nationally by the Village Voice, the corporation criticized those concerned about child sex trafficking as “prohibitionists bent on ending the world’s oldest profession,” acknowledging that, as a seller of adults services ads, “Village Voice has a stake in this story.”

Industry analysts suggest that Village Voice’s stake in adult services advertisements is worth about \$22.7 million in annual revenue. Many state attorneys general believe that Backpage.com is attempting to minimize the impact of child sex trafficking because they fear it will turn attention to the company’s robust prostitution

advertising business. While Backpage.com has ramped up its effort to screen some ads for minors, the attorneys general involved in today’s letter believe that “Backpage.com sets a minimal bar for content review in an effort to temper public condemnation, while ensuring that the revenue spigot provided by prostitu-

The hub for illegal sex ads is a magnet for those seeking to exploit minors and points to more than 50 cases, in 22 states over three years, involving the trafficking or attempted trafficking of minors through Backpage.com

tion advertising remains intact.”

The letter from state attorneys general makes a series of requests to Backpage.com, asking that the company willingly provide information in lieu of a subpoena. For example, in order to substantiate the claim that the compa-

ny enforces policies to prevent illegal activity, the attorneys general ask that Backpage.com describe in detail its understanding of what precisely constitutes “illegal activity,” and whether advertisements for prostitution fall into that category. The attorneys general also ask, among other requests, how many advertisements in its adult section and subsections have been submitted since Sept. 1, 2010, how many of those advertisements were individually screened, how many were rejected and how many were removed after being discovered to be for illegal services.

In 2008, McKenna helped lead 42 other attorneys general in reaching an agreement with Craigslist to crack down on illegal listings, in an effort to reduce crimes like distributing child pornography and human trafficking. Craigslist ultimately removed its “erotic services” section altogether in May 2009.

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com



King Dedication



SUSAN FRIED PHOTO

The Total Experience Gospel Choir performed at a local Martin Luther King Memorial Commemoration Sunday, Aug. 29, at the Martin Luther King Memorial Park. The event in Seattle was held despite the cancellation of the dedication of the new MLK memorial on the Washington Mall due to Hurricane Irene. Several speakers including King County Councilman Larry Gosset and community activist Harriet Walden spoke about the legacy of Dr. King.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEATTLE SEPTEMBER 2011



If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Saturday September 3

BLUES FOOD FEST: Good friends, good food, good music that’s what communities are made of! \$20 adults, \$10 youth. You may go to www.brownpapertickets.com or www.bluesforfoodfest.org to purchase tickets. Noon – 8 p.m. Magnuson Park, 6344 NE 74th St.

VINTAGE AIRCRAFT WEEKEND: This is an opportunity to experience history in action at a family event. Enjoy vintage aircraft, great food,

live swing jazz music and much more. \$10 admission. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Historic Flight Foundation, 10719 Bernie Webber Dr.

Thursday September 8

TALL SHIPS LADY WASHINGTON PUBLIC DOCKSIDE TOURS: Self guided tours aboard Lady Washington and/or Hawaiian Chieftain hosted by crew members in period costumes. \$3 donation per person is appreciated. Noon – 5 p.m. Center for Wooden Boats, 1010 Valley St.

Friday September 9

KIDS “KRAZY” CARNIVAL: Last family fun Friday of the year! Join us for activities, games and prizes. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$4.75 adults, \$3.25 youth/Sr. Mounger Pool, 2535 32nd Ave. W. 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Friday – Sunday September 9 – 25

DO THE PUYALLUP FAIR: Fair opens September 9 at 10 a.m. and runs thru September 25. Hours are as follows Sat – Sun 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. Sun – Thurs 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. Admission is adults \$11, seniors (62+) \$8, students (6 – 18) \$8 and children under 5 are free.

Saturday September 10

5TH ANNUAL SKYWAY CAR SHOW AND COMMUNITY FESTIVAL: Throughout the day activities featured will include arts and crafts, clowns, carnival games and much more. 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Roman Casino Parking Lot, 11829 Renton Ave. S, Seattle

Sunday September 11

EXPLORE, EXPERIENCE AND ENJOY LIVE ALOHA HAWAIIAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL: Experience the festive spirit of the Islands while you learn their true history. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. in the Fisher Pavilion and Fisher Rooftop and the South Lawn.