

Diocese Protects Kids from Pedophiles' Lures

BY ROGER PAYNE

From the prisons of Tennessee to the PIE to a Sherlockian young computer hacker in London, Kenneth Wooden has spent a lifetime gathering information that will help keep children safe, not just from sexual predators, but from becoming victims of many types of exploitation.

He has testified before Congress 14 times. The Secret Service, 60 Minutes, 20/20, and countless other prestigious law enforcement organizations and media outlets have tapped his expertise as a consultant, speaker, and trainer.

Last week, under the auspices of the diocesan Safe Environment Program, Wooden shared his knowledge in awareness and "train the trainers" lectures at Our Lady of Angels, Bay Ridge, and the Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston. Pastors, priests, principals, and DREs began to learn about Wooden's "Lures" program, which beginning in January will be a fixture in every parochial school and religious education program in the diocese.

The expected result is that thousands of children will know how to keep themselves safe and resist the "lures" of

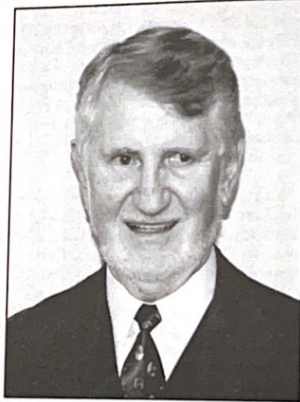
ground, that alone would lead you to say, this man knows what he's talking about."

Wooden's passion for children's safety first surfaced upon his return from the Korean conflict, when he "missed the GI Bill by 30 days." Unable to afford college, he obtained a job with the New Jersey State Police as a fingerprint expert, and found his reward in one particular weekly duty.

"What I really loved was, every Thursday afternoon, I would get a couple of hundred sets of fingerprints of people wanting to drive school buses," Wooden recalled. "I would catch one or two dozen child molesters every week just by matching their fingerprints with criminal records."

Wooden's success led to a stint on a prison reform commission, where he found the jails overcrowded with what he terms "status offenders" — runaways, truants, and others who had committed no crimes but had nowhere else to be.

Their plight inspired his first book, "Weeping in the Playtime of Others," which "Mike Wallace read poolside at Ronald Reagan's estate," chuckles Wooden, who then became Wallace's trusted source on child abuse and a fea-



Kenneth Wooden

operated and how they could realistically be thwarted. The Lures program is the result. The program lists 17 specific types of lures pedophiles use on children, and trains children not only to resist those specific lures, but other inappropriate overtures as well. And the comprehensive four-part program includes training the trainers, a two-day in-school program, a Parent Guide to empower understanding and follow-up at home, and a TV news series excerpted from Wooden's appearances on national television.

"I'm not here to sell a program, I'm here to sell a partnership," says Wooden. "It's highly enlightening to teach the teachers how organized the predators are. That's been true for audiences ranging from Congressional committees to PTA luncheons. It motivates them to teach or take action."

Of course, the program is not static; Wooden's research continues. With the internet becoming an ever more vital medium for pedophile operations, Wooden, a self-confessed computer illiterate, turned to experts for support.

"I read in the newspapers about a kid going to prison for hacking Microsoft and Boeing Aircraft," Wooden said. "The judge gave me Michael Wilkinson for 200 hours of community service, and I asked him to bring two hackers from elsewhere as well. He came to Vermont and brought his 'representatives' from Philadelphia and London, England!"

"These kids were dynamite! They gave

me real insight into how pedophiles use computers, communicate with each other, and the questions they ask kids to get a foothold. They also destroyed a bunch of pedophile websites before they even got off the ground."

The bad news there, according to Wooden, is that pedophiles exploit our worst moments and fears, and we all have them.

"The key question pedophiles ask is 'How do your parents get along?' That's a scary question," sighs Wooden. "There's a normal conflict between parents and adolescents, and parents do have those moments. Predators know that children have a concern that their parents may split or leave them, and they use that to build a rapport with the child. Once a child is talking, everything comes out, and the predator is home free."

"Parents need to talk about those moments with their children. We also train the children to understand that if someone is asking about parents' moments, then that's a predator stalking, and kids need to tell parents immediately."

The program now includes a sample internet use contract for parents to sign with their kids, which includes clauses like "I will not respond to people I don't know." It's simple, practical tools like that, which are based on specific research on pedophile techniques, that make Wooden's program successful. Plus, of course, his very down-to-earth teaching approach.

"I never liked puppets, McGruff and stuff," Wooden confesses. "They're fun, but the kids can miss the point. I'm more direct. To train my kids how important it is not to run out into the street, I'd take them out into the neighborhood and show them a flat cat."

"Knowing how organized predators are, I've designed something to prevent their specific techniques. Predators have told me in prison they couldn't crack this training. For the first time in history, we're giving kids specific boundaries."

"We have a lot of fun teaching this program. The kids enjoy it, and they really get it. We teach by asking questions. We teach them the concept of lure — how do you catch a fish? What's another word for bait? What's the largest computer in the world? (It's the human brain.) Let's program that computer to resist lures. The kids love it, and they really get it."

"It's common sense, really," Wooden concluded.

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pedophiles and other potential predators. According to Sister Pat Hudson, director of the Safe Environment Program, that's the logical next step for the diocese.

"The Safe Environment Program has done a lot of work in training adults in sex abuse awareness over the past two-and-a-half years," said Sister Pat. "We are now moving into directly helping children understand what they need to do to help protect themselves."

"We've researched many programs," she explained. "We've chosen this one because it's the most reality-based, it deals with very specific situations, it's manageable for the teachers, it's very straightforward, and it's what we want the kids to learn. It's also broader than just sex abuse education; it's really a personal safety program."

"Many many priests and pastors came to hear Ken. It attests to the serious commitment the priests have to doing something to avoid sex abuse of children. If you look at Ken's back-

ground, that alone would lead you to say, this man knows what he's talking about."

tured presentation on 60 Minutes on "Kiddie Porn." That led to contact with a minister in Tennessee whose farm for wayward boys turned out to be the center of a national child prostitution ring. Wooden got the assignment to investigate how the ring operated, and his eyes were opened wide.

"These people actually had a newsletter called PIE — the Pedophile Information Exchange — and it included a feature called 'Lure of the Month,'" explained Wooden. Essentially, each "lure" was a tip on how best to enlist a child's cooperation in their own destruction.

"The lure of the month was soap crayons," Wooden recalls. "I was appalled. We had gotten our own daughters soap crayons so they could draw in the bathtub."

Determined to save children from such monstrous perversion, Wooden began lecturing nationwide. And everywhere he went, he visited prisons and interviewed pedophiles to learn how they

Power of Prayer Emphasized at Vigil for Unborn Children

CHURCH OF SAINT BERNARD



THE TABLET, DECEMBER 18, 2004

BY MARIE ELENA GIOSSI

"Never underestimate the power of Mary to do good things and work miracles," retired Bishop of Brooklyn Thomas V. Daily told more than 50 devoted pilgrims who turned out for the Helpers of God's Precious Infants monthly Rosary Prayer Vigil on Dec. 11.

Two purple Advent candles gleamed from the altar of St. Bernard Church, Mill Basin, greeting early risers who filled the pews for 7:30 a.m. Mass, celebrated by Bishop Daily. Concelebrating were Father Ralph Caputo, St. Bernard's pastor; Msgr. Philip Reilly, founder of the Helpers, and Msgr. Raymond Kelly, pastor of St. Malachy, East New York. Deacon Frank D'Accordo of St. Bernard assisted.

"You can see I'm beautifully draped in a chasuble of Our Lady of Guadalupe," Bishop Daily

announced from the altar, showing off the gold and royal blue vestment featuring Our Lady of Guadalupe's likeness. The garment was a gift from the Helpers' Chapter in Rockland County to the Helpers of Brooklyn and Queens. The image, he explained, was handmade by Contemplative Sisters. He wore the chasuble in honor of the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe of the Americas — "the patron saint of everybody."

Throughout the morning, the bishop spoke about the power of Mary, who was the focus of both Scripture readings and the bishop's homily.

Bishop Daily discussed his involvement with the Legion of Mary, and how he once joined them in their door-to-door evangelization efforts. Although he talked to each family, an octogenarian named Charlie Fairbank

one converting hearts. Fairbank would simply give each person he met a Miraculous Medal and tell them the story behind it.

"That's the secret of life — doing the will of God in our everyday experiences in the ups and downs . . . And in our various circumstances and vocations," Bishop Daily said, noting that that is how Mary lived her life as well.

He encouraged the faithful to be like his friend Charlie and follow the example set by Mary, who was the "perfect disciple of her Son in word, sacrament and love."

"Now we'll do the will of God and pray to change the hearts and minds of people who spread evil," he said.

Led by an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Daily and Msgr. Reilly guided the crowd, bundled in winter coats, hats,

AN ICON OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE led the Helpers of God's Precious Infants monthly pro-life prayer vigil last Saturday. The faithful gathered at St. Bernard Church, Mill Basin, for 7:30 a.m. Mass before processing to a local abortuary.