

Today's Editorial October 02: Help keep children safe

Editor

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If you think sex abuse of children doesn't exist in the Cayman Islands, think again.

It's out there and has been for years.

Fortunately more and more people are getting their heads out of the sand and admitting we have a problem.

It's a problem that affects all races, genders, creeds and economic status.

Child sex abuse is one of those issues that everyone knows about but doesn't want to talk about.

Thanks to Hedge Fund Care, the issue is being brought out into the light.

That organisation has created Steward of Children, a training programme that educates adults to prevent, recognise and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

While we repeat the mantra of 'don't take candy from strangers' to our children, strangers – in many instances – aren't the danger.

Most sexual abuse is committed by people known to the child with family members constituting one-third to one-half of the perpetrators against girls and 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the perpetrators against boys.

No matter how smart a child is, he or she does not see the world through sceptical adult eyes.

They have a weak understanding of motives and simply take people at face value.

The concept of stranger danger is in conflict with the social constraints we put on children that they be polite to adults.

Most children think a stranger is someone threatening or evil. Bad guys don't always look bad.

A neighbour, a familiar face in a child's daily routine, or someone the child's parents know well enough to speak to or whose name the child knows is probably not regarded as a stranger.

That's why it's up to us to learn and recognise the signs of child sexual abuse.

Training sessions are being offered for free every Saturday this month. Anyone can attend and everyone should.

If we don't protect our children, who will?

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