



CONTACT:
Jessica Westra
Media Relations
616.403.6628
jwmr@hotmail.com
www.theswimsuitlesson.com

Veteran Police Sergeant Authors book on Protecting Children From Sexual Predators

Jon Holsten, Author of *The Swimsuit Lesson*, Offers Tips and Support to Parents

Available for Interviews

As a veteran police sergeant and child sex crimes investigator in Fort Collins, Colorado, Jon Holsten has investigated and helped successfully prosecute dozens of child sexual abuse cases.



Holsten's experiences on the front lines of law enforcement have led him to seek new ways to protect children from predators. **His research and passion led him to create the book, *The Swimsuit Lesson*.** Beautifully written and illustrated, *The Swimsuit Lesson* helps parents talk to their young children about privacy and those who might do them harm, teaching children that their swimsuit covers those special parts of their body that should not be touched.

The book has been featured on ABC's Good Morning America, numerous local media outlets and even caught the attention of the Oprah Winfrey Show. Jon has written articles on child sexual abuse and prevention for Focus on the Family, Children's Ministry Magazine, and other publications. In addition to his international speaking audiences, he has become a popular speaker for local MOPS (Mothers' of Pre-Schoolers) groups. Through his writing and speaking, Jon demonstrates his passion for helping parents protect their children from predators. A doting dad himself, Jon and his wife, Ceri, have six children of their own and make their home in Fort Collins, Colorado.

For more information on the book and Jon's work, go to www.theswimsuitlesson.com



Q & A

with Jon Holsten
Author of *The Swimsuit Lesson*



1 When is the best time to begin discussing this topic at home?

This varies a from family to family, but I like to say when you are able to verbally communicate back and forth with your child -- it's time to start that conversation. In my family, the little girls could grasp the concept at around age 3 or 4. The boys were closer to 4 and 5. Some parents may feel the topic is a bit "heavy" for a young child, but done correctly, the child will simply learn the concept that every part of his or her body is wonderful, but some parts are private. Bath time is a great opportunity to discuss privacy and, of course, I encourage parents to utilize my book, *The Swimsuit Lesson*, which teaches children that their swimsuit covers those special parts of their body that should not be touched.

2 Should both parents be involved in the conversation?

I think it's essential for parents to show a unified front when discussing the issue with their children -- and that's why I encourage couples to tackle the conversation together. Of course, parents know their children best, and may feel it more appropriate for one or the other to approach the child. In the end, however, the child must absolutely understand that his or her parents agree on the boundaries and are both available to help if something happens.

3 How can I help my child overcome fear about sexual abuse?

Of course, the hope is that a child never develops an unhealthy fear to begin with. That's the goal of *The Swimsuit Lesson*, where casual reading and conversation creates a non-threatening environment where a child can learn of real danger in an empowering way. A little boy or girl is quick to sense and feed on mom or dad's fear. Parents must casually approach the issue with their child -- clearly communicating what parts of his or her body are off limits to others and imploring them to let you know if something happens that you've taught them is wrong. Done correctly, a child will be empowered, not paranoid.

4 I think there is a sex offender in my neighborhood. What should I do?

Great question. Before I dive into the answer, we should probably tell people how to find out where the registered sex offenders live. Simply go to your local law enforcement agency (the one that shows up when you call 911) and ask to see the list. You can also check out your state's sex offender data base online, but just know that not all sex offenders have to be listed online -- just the more serious offenders. Also...NEVER pay for a list as some websites require. It's free when you go to the law enforcement agency itself.

Back to the question. We are concerned about registered sex offenders because of their tendency to re-offend. In fact, registered sex offenders are 7.5 times more likely to re-offend than someone who has never before offended, and that's why we want to know where they live. No matter what offense a sex offender committed, that person will not be a close family friend, and my children will never be in their house, or be alone with that person.

5 I think this might be happening in a friend or loved-ones home. What should I do?

If you have a strong suspicion that a friend or loved one is being abused, you absolutely must have a conversation with that child's parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian is the suspected abuser, you may need to go directly to law enforcement with your concerns. A simple hunch that something might be going on is not enough for law enforcement to act on. The main thing is to maintain a positive and caring relationship with a possible victim so they have someone to go to if/when they chose to come forward.

By the way (and this should go without saying), if you suspect abuse is going on in a particular place, don't let your child be there without your close supervision. That's exactly the type of risk we want parents to look for and avoid.

I invite parents to visit my website at www.theswimsuitlesson.com



Interview Topic Ideas:

- How to Help Your Children Stop Sexual Predators
- How to Have One of the Most Important Conversations You'll Ever Have to Have With Your Child
- Protecting Your Kids from Sexual Abuse Without Scaring Them
- What to Tell Your Children When a Sex Offender Lives Nearby
- Recent Stats on Child Sexual Abuse and How Parents Can Respond

Jon is available for comment on:

- News reports on child sexual abuse statistics
- Current news events relating to the topic of child sexual abuse, as appropriate

Interview Questions:

- 1** What is your background in law enforcement? How has that evolved into writing and speaking about preventing abuse among children?
- 2** Tell us about your book, *The Swimsuit Lesson*. How can parents use the book to help their children understand what abuse is and how to report abuse?
- 3** This can be a tricky, sensitive subject for parents. What are some practical tips you give for parents on how to talk about "inappropriate touch" with their young children without scaring them?
- 4** What can churches and school educators do with this book? How are they helpful in helping prevent abuse and fostering an environment that is open to talking and reporting abuse?
- 5** Where can we find your book — and what is your website?

What others are saying:

"A unique and passionate book!"

— *Diane Sawyer, ABC's World News Tonight*

"A simple and easy to understand formula."

— *Charlie Gibson, ABC News*



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