

Driver tries to lure girl, 10, with ice cream

EMMA POOLE
CALGARY HERALD

Police are once again alerting parents after a confrontation between a Calgary youngster and a man trying to lure her into a vehicle.

The encounter happened Tuesday afternoon at the intersection of Falconridge Drive and 68th Street N.E.

Police said a 10-year-old girl was walking in the area when a newer model van or truck pulled up beside her.

The man opened the passenger door and asked the girl if she wanted to go for ice cream.

The girl ran from the car and home to her mother, who called police.

Calgary police Det. Iwan Munnikhuis of the child abuse unit, said there is no indication that this confrontation is connected to several others in the city within the past three weeks.

Regardless, police want parents to teach children how to avoid confrontations with strangers.

"Our message is to keep vigilant," said Munnikhuis. "Be vigilant with your kids." Munnikhuis said police are co-ordinating their efforts on some of the open investigations.

Detectives with the child abuse unit will be reviewing some of the files and may interview some of the intended young victims, he said.

Police are not classifying Tuesday's incident as an attempted abduction.

The man wanted for questioning in the latest incident is white, 55 to 65, with short salt-and-pepper hair and two days' facial growth.

He was wearing a blue hoodie sweatshirt and blue jeans.

The vehicle is a dark brown, late-model truck or van.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call police at 266-1234 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

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Feds fund media, religion centre

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CALGARY HERALD

A Calgary-based national organization has received a federal grant to improve media coverage of religion.

The \$350,000 federal contribution to the Centre for Faith and Media was announced Wednesday. The money will be used to develop programs to help religious groups reach the media and the media understand faith issues.

Jean Augustine, secretary of state for multiculturalism and women, announced the grant.

"Canadians expect informed news coverage, which respects the diversity of faiths and cultural complexity of our culture," said centre chairwoman Jocelyn Burgener. "The centre is committed to assisting the media through the development of quality resources, workshops and research."

Canadian Heritage's Pablo Sobrino said "the government is committed to recognizing that religion plays an important part" in Canadian society, that Canada now boasts a population made up of 13 per cent visible minorities and that the grant reflects Heritage Canada's mandate to "reflect Canada back to Canadians."

The centre, founded in 1999 by former Calgary Herald religion editor Gordon Legge, already runs a website at www.faithandmedia.org.

It has produced handbooks for journalists on Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Handbooks on Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism are also in the works. And Burgener said the next step is to develop national media workshops.

According to Statistics Canada, the nation is 77 per cent Christian, two per cent Muslim, one per cent each Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh, and 16 per cent "no religion."

University of Calgary religious studies professor Eliezer Segal suggested the centre may be pulled in two directions: "faith communities looking for access to media" and "academics, trying to provide objective, non-partisan information."

He said the funding source can become an issue.

"There's a naive expectation that the more people know each other, the more they like each other," Segal said. "There may be evidence for the contrary theory. But (federal funding) certainly sets a different direction."

Calgary Police chaplain Jim Amsing said the centre could help with community policing, and help "faith-based charities connect with the media."

Centre board member John Stokoe, finance officer at Calgary's Rocky Mountain College, said the centre can be most useful in dispelling religious stereotypes in news stories. But it does face the challenge of an open-ended mandate.

"We'll never get to the last faith group or small off-shoot," he said.

United Church minister David Spence, editor of the Multifaith Calendar, said federal funding for the centre recognizes that religion is important in the public sphere.



Jocelyn Burgener



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