

Prior offender pleads to child porn charges

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BY KEITH EPPS

A Spotsylvania County man who is already a registered sex offender pleaded guilty yesterday to four felony child pornography charges.

Joel Drake, 56, was also convicted of a misdemeanor count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. He will face a maximum penalty of 21 years in prison when he is sentenced Oct. 27 in Fredericksburg Circuit Court.

According to prosecutor Travis Bird, an investigation began early this year after Drake sent explicit pictures of teenage boys to the cell phone of an acquaintance.

The acquaintance, who was working for city police as a confidential informant on an unrelated case, showed the pictures to a detective.

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Police later arranged for the informant to have Drake call the detective, who was pretending to be an interested 17-year-old boy named Steve.

Police said Drake then sent pictures to "Steve" and arranged a meeting Lew's Auto Salvage in Thornburg, where Drake worked.

Police showed up instead and took Drake into custody.

Court records show that Drake molested a boy in Spotsylvania in 1994 and 1995. He was arrested in March of 2000 and convicted of two counts of sodomy in September of that year.

He served a 10-year prison sentence and is on the state sex offender registry.

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