

# National RSOL challenges media: Stop feeding the hysteria

written by Sandy | October 31, 2016

Replete with countless stories flowing forth from every region in the nation, a national civil rights organization dedicated to restoring constitutional protections to registered sex offenders is calling on media professionals to cease so called "ride alongs" with local law enforcement officers on Halloween.

Whether it is called Operation Trick or Treat, Operation Blackout, Operation Boo, or some other name that suggests undercover work and Halloween at the same time, the procedures are essentially the same. On Halloween night, and in some places starting prior to that, bands of law enforcement officers scour the city, targeting the addresses of registered sex offenders to be sure they are in compliance with their restrictions. These include, but are not limited to, no outside lights on, no Halloween decorations in the yard or windows, and no candy waiting at the front door.

Newspaper articles for days and even weeks in advance praise these efforts to protect children from sexual assault while they are trick-or-treating, and then journalists and others in the media lend credibility to the situation by riding along on Halloween night and filming the efforts. News at ten and then for days thereafter praises the officers and the initiatives taken to keep children safe.

However, according to Brenda Jones, executive director of RSOL, these initiatives are a waste of time and resources. "This is very clearly a solution searching desperately for a

problem. Anyone serious about protecting children on Halloween will pay far more attention to the incidences of injury sustained by children being hit by cars while crossing the street. If you're looking for statistics to support the hysterical notion that sex offenders are abducting children, you're going to be very disappointed."

Experts and research verify this. Exhaustive research reveals one case of a child being abducted during trick-or treat; [in 1973 in Wisconsin](#) Gerald Turner molested and then murdered Lisa French, age 9. Turner was a neighbor of the family; no registry existed then, but if it had, nothing indicates that Turner would have been on it.

In speaking of the value of special conditions imposed upon registered citizens at Halloween, [Emily Horowitz, professor and chairperson](#) at the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York, says, "All it does is make people really afraid, and it kind of destroys the humanity and the happiness of what should be a fun night... Common sense is needed on Halloween and every other day – but it is far more dangerous to turn the holiday into an excuse to demonize people who have served their time and who are trying to rebuild their lives."

"The media should stop pandering to fear. Perpetuating an obvious myth in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary is extremely irresponsible. Jumping into a cruiser to ride along with a cop on Halloween searching for compliant sex offenders sends the wrong message to the public. The public—and children—are safe from sex offenders. But the public is never safe when the media voluntarily assists law enforcement in bolstering false claims and encouraging mass hysteria on an epic scale," Jones concluded.