

FIRST GLANCE

Principals briefed on protecting kids from sex offenders

By **STEPHEN FOUTES**
News Tribune

Principals at Jefferson City's elementary schools will have all summer to determine if increased safety precautions are necessary to protect children from sex offenders.

On Thursday, Cole County Prosecutor Bill Tackett met with principals from the district's elementary schools to show them where locally registered sex offenders live.

According to the Cole County Sheriff's Department's sex offenders list, there are about 80 registered offenders living in the county.

According to the sheriff's department Web site, the list was last updated on May 8. Although the list has about 100 names, many of the offenders listed have either moved away from Cole County or are incarcerated.

During a short presentation, Tackett showed principals a map that pinpoints the location of offenders based on that list.

That map indicates the
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greatest concentration of offenders live close to downtown Jefferson City and to East Elementary School.

Tackett said it's important to let people know where sexual offenders live because a child molester "is somebody that isn't really cured."

He added: "They can be counseled and can recognize their problem. But the potential lies there for further criminal action. That's why they get more attention, in terms of where they are."

School District Spokesman David Luther said the information Tackett presented Thursday was vital.

He also said the timing of the presentation was good because it gives administrators something to think about over the summer.

"I think this is the best time," Luther said. "You can come to our principals anytime during the year to have this discussion. But by giving them the information now, they can be thinking about what they can do in their buildings to continue to make them safer."

Tackett also said it is important

for school officials to know where offenders live because anytime an offender is near a group of children, there is a potential for a problem.

"I wish it were some other way and I wish it were curable," Tackett said. "I don't believe the stud-

ies support that, and as a result, I want to know where they are."

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To view the list of registered offenders, access the offenders list at the Cole County Sheriff's Department Web site: www.cole-countysheriff.org.