

Source: Ennis Daily News
Courtesy of Ennis ISD PD Chief Ross Jones

Police find kidnapped EJHS student

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Police found a kidnapped Ennis Junior High School student Wednesday before his suspected kidnapper was able to return to his home in Ohio.

Ennis Police Det. Sgt. Mike Hopson said an adult at the school called police at 9 a.m. Wednesday with information about a child who was missing from school, suspecting a runaway. Hopson said the parent was in contact with EISD police officers and Ennis police, describing a boy walking north on Clay Street with an unknown older male, which raised suspicions.

"A parent reported that the victim was not at school and believed they might be in danger," Hopson said. "The reporting parent met with Officer Scott and said they'd seen the victim walking with another man — the victim is 12 years old and was supposed to be at school."

Hopson said the victim was apparently involved in text messaging conversations with another student at EJHS throughout the morning, and the student reported the victim said he was leaving with a "friend" and wouldn't tell where he was going.

"He'd met the guy online, and apparently the other student knew this older guy was 24," Hopson said. "He was supposedly going to take the child to Ohio by bus."

Officers gathered enough information by interviewing the parents and student to find out the victim was at the Geneva Inn Motel on Kaufmann Street, Hopson said.

Officers found the two in a room, he said.

The suspect is being withheld pending the issuance of a search warrant for his Ohio home, Hopson said.

"Right now he's charged with kidnapping and it will probably be amended with a charge of online solicitation," Hopson said.

The suspect will be arraigned this afternoon or Friday, Hopson said, and his identity will be released to the public.

Kidnapping suspect's bond set

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The suspect arrested Wednesday in the kidnapping of an Ennis Junior High School student admitted he intended to take the young student back to his home in Ohio, police said.

Det. Sgt. Mike Hopson said the suspect, 24-year-old Brandon Fox from East Cleveland, Ohio, didn't have any criminal history to speak of that would make him stand out — but told police he came to Ennis via Greyhound bus planning to take the junior high school student.

Fox is being held at Wayne McCollum Detention Center in Waxahachie on \$225,000 bond.

Hopson said Fox admitted to meeting the student online, but details of the exchanges between the two are under investigation.

Fox was arrested Wednesday when adults reported seeing the 12-year-old student walking with Fox on Clay Street, police said. Hopson said parents reported the sighting because of suspicions of danger.

Police tracked the two down through information gleaned from text messaging conversations between the student and classmates at EJHS, Hopson said. They were discovered in a room at the Geneva Motel Inn on Kaufman Street.

Fox was initially charged with kidnapping, although police deliberated over charging him with aggravated kidnapping — Chief John Erisman said the difference lies in whether there was physical or sexual abuse in the interim. Once the suspect learned the student was texting classmates, he reportedly disposed of the boy's cell phone, which helps back up the kidnapping charge, Erisman said.

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A charge of online solicitation of a minor was also added to the list, Erisman said.

Abduction shows importance of educating children

A kidnapping involving a local junior high school student shows the susceptibility of even a tight-knit community like ours to the dangers presented by child predators.

We've had problems with this for some time now, and highlighted those problems through numerous reports of local people taking advantage of local youngsters. We can't really stress enough how important it is for parents to be involved in the lives of their children to the point they know who they're with and what's happening even when they aren't physically able to watch them. Even more important as communication becomes all the more fluid in our society is knowing who they're taking to.

Otherwise, you get a situation like what happened Wednesday morning. A suspect from out of town allegedly took the trip down to Ennis via bus with the intent of taking this young boy back to his home in Ohio. We can all imagine what the next part of that story was going to be.

There's just no reason to stall having conversations with your children to prevent this.

The school district isn't — EISD Police Chief Ross Jones and others involved in the well-being of our students while they are under the protection of the school district are making it pretty clear to children what's happening in our world today and how important it is to exercise all the caution they can.

We've got to give credit to the parents and adults who saw the EJHS student walking with his alleged abductor and thought quickly enough to get in touch with police. If it doesn't look like it should be happening — if a child is walking down Clay Street during the middle of school hours with an older man that doesn't look like a relative, for example — it probably shouldn't be.

If it weren't for that quick intervention, it probably would be a completely different story that we ended up reporting this week, and one that we would have been much sadder.

Please — for your children's sake — never quit telling them to not get involved with strangers.