

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Unauthorized man attempts to take child from daycare

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The Bandera Prophet

Parents and child-care facilities are asked to be extra vigilant as law enforcement investigates an unauthorized attempt to pick up a child last week.

On June 9, an unknown man tried to check out a student from a Pipe Creek daycare center. Because the staff member did not recognize him, he was refused access. The parents were notified that he had tried to pick up their child, and they said no one they knew fit the man's description. According to reports, the man was of white or hispanic descent, with dark hair, a "very weathered face," "jagged" teeth and missing a tooth on the left side of his mouth, about six-feet tall and 225 pounds. He was wearing a white and black striped long-sleeve shirt.

He was not seen driving away, however he may be in a silver car with a spoiler on the back, or a white SUV with a dent on the passenger side door and quarter panel.

"Parents should ensure that the daycare facility that they use has a current list of persons permitted to pick up their children," Bandera County Chief Deputy Matt King said.

Anyone with information on this occurrence is urged to notify the Bandera County Sheriff's Office at 830-796-3771.

Update from the facility owner (*The Prophet is not releasing the name of the daycare to help ensure the safety and security of the staff and children*):

We had a man stop by and inquire if we had a child of a certain name enrolled. He was not attempting to try and pick up the child. I informed him that it is our policy not to tell anyone who may or may not be enrolled at our school. He told me a couple of more things and I told him that it sounded like he needed to contact the child's parents and find out where the child in question was enrolled because I could not help him. He thanked me and went on his way.

The incident made me realize some things that people may not ever think about. As a childcare center, we have children enrolled that may have custody documents on file, restraining orders, may be a CPS case and be a foster child, or may even be adopted. With the responsibility for the children in our care we tend to think about all manner of things that most people wouldn't think twice about. Unfortunately, in today's world we have to face the fact that some people are not what they seem and that they may have a hidden agenda.

I used this incident to let all of my families enrolled know what had happened and to ask them to adopt the same policy of not sharing information with others. People do not realize that the person next to them at a baseball or soccer game may be there to gather information. They are innocent enough questions and nine times out of ten are just that, innocent. However, unless you actually know the person, questions like, "Hey, which kiddo is yours? I wonder if my grandkid goes to your daycare? I can't wait to go on vacation, are y'all going somewhere this Summer? I've been there! When are y'all going? I wonder how many of

the kids here all go to the same school, where do y'all go? I can't remember what #7's name is, do you happen to know it?"

I am a pretty optimistic person and I really like to believe that people are inherently good, but in today's world, that is very naive thinking.

Nowadays I believe it is safer to err on the side of caution and think twice before revealing information to anyone about another persons child or your own family. You may not have all the private details about a child's family and may be giving a person information that can help them to find an ex or a child who has been removed by authorities, You may be letting someone know where you live and when and how long you will be on vacation. And you might just give someone enough information to make it easy to take your child or someone else's child.

I am not trying to scare people, but I would like people to really think about how many times you give complete strangers information they shouldn't know. I am not saying this person that stopped to ask if a child was enrolled with us is bad, but I do know that I did not know him and that I am not ever going to give someone information on any child that may or may not be enrolled.

I used the incident to open up a dialogue with our families here about adopting our policy of not discussing private information with others. I also believe this is a perfect opportunity to ask others in our community to do the same. Everybody needs to realize how much information we sometimes give to complete strangers. And you do not know what they may do with that information. Nine times out of ten it's probably exactly what it seems, small talk. But that one time it could be something more.