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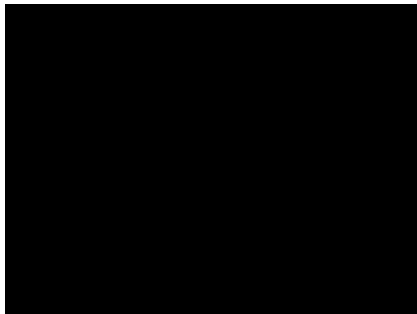
Mom indicted in deadly MySpace hoax

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Mom of feuding teen indicted in Internet suicide case
- Lori Drew allegedly helped with MySpace hoax on 13-year-old
- Megan Meier hanged herself after hoax

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LOS ANGELES, California (AP) -- A Missouri woman was indicted Thursday for her alleged role in perpetrating a hoax on the online social network MySpace against a 13-year-old neighbor who committed suicide.



Megan Meier, 13, hanged herself in her bedroom after being targeted in a MySpace hoax.

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Lori Drew, of suburban St. Louis, allegedly helped create a MySpace account in the name of someone who didn't exist to convince Megan Meier she was chatting with a 16-year-old boy named Josh Evans.

She was charged with conspiracy and fraudulently gaining access to someone else's computer.

Megan hanged herself at home in October 2006, allegedly after receiving a dozen or more cruel messages, including one stating the world would be better off without her.

Salvador Hernandez, assistant agent in charge of the Los Angeles FBI office, called the case heart-rending.

"The Internet is a world unto itself. People must know how far they can go before they must stop. They exploited a young girl's weaknesses," Hernandez said. "Whether the defendant could

have foreseen the results, she's responsible for her actions."

Drew was charged with one count of conspiracy and three counts of accessing protected computers without authorization to get information used to inflict emotional distress on the girl.

Drew has denied creating the account or sending messages to Megan.

Her attorney, Jim Briscoe, did not immediately return messages seeking comment on Thursday.

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- [Read the indictment \(pdf\)](#)

A man who opened the door at the Drew family home in Dardenne Prairie, Missouri, on Thursday said the family had no comment.

Megan's mother, Tina Meier, said she believed media reports and public outrage helped move the case forward for prosecution.

"I'm thrilled that this woman is going to face charges that she has needed to face since the day we found out what was going on, and since the day she decided to be a part of this entire ridiculous stunt," she said.

Megan's father, Ron Meier, 38, said he began to cry "tears of joy" when he heard of the indictment. The parents are now separated, which Tina Meier has said stemmed from the circumstances of their daughter's death.

Tina Meier has acknowledged Megan was too young to have a MySpace account under the Web site's guidelines, but she said she had been able to closely monitor the account. Meier's family has also acknowledged that Megan was also sending mean messages before her death.

Megan was being treated for attention deficit disorder and depression, her family has said. Meier has said Drew knew Megan was on medication.

MySpace issued a statement saying it "does not tolerate cyberbullying" and was cooperating fully with the U.S. attorney.

U.S. Attorney Thomas P. O'Brien said this was the first time the federal statute on accessing protected computers has been used in a social-networking case. It has been used in the past to address hacking.

"This was a tragedy that did not have to happen," O'Brien said at a Los Angeles press conference.

Both the girl and MySpace are named as victims in the case, he said.

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