

Sex offender taken into custody in Grafton after trying to lure children into a van for "fishing poles"

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GRAFTON - A convicted sexual predator was taken into custody last Thursday following a suspicious incident at the riverfront witnessed by a Grafton police officer who was walking her dog.

According to authorities, Gary Darnell, 45, whose last known address is in the 1300 block of Third Street in Cottage Hills, was near a boat ramp in Grafton talking to a group of children. An off-duty officer felt his actions were a bit suspicious, so she ran his license plate number and made a startling discovery - Darnell was a registered sex offender against children, having been charged with aggravated sexual abuse of a victim under the age of nine.

The officer said Darnell was attempting to lure children into his van to collect "fishing poles." While Darnell is from Cottage Hills, he told authorities he was in Grafton to "go fishing." Darnell did have a fishing license on his person, but it was expired, authorities said. The officer told the children to leave before taking Darnell into custody.

Darnell was charged with loitering within 500 feet of a park, which as a sex offender, he is not allowed to do.

The Illinois Sex Offender Registry, which is operated through the Illinois State Police, states Darnell is labeled as a sexual predator after sexually abusing a one-year-old child when he was 32 years old.