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A Small Victory for the Little Guy - All of Us!

Though it sometimes feels like a "wild, wild, west" online, law enforcement agencies are trying to work with the laws that are available to them.

We are thrilled to report some little-known news that effects all of us with email accounts, including our children.

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18th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

Our attention this month turns to new hopes and dreams following the presidential election.

We have said many times at our workshops that the laws in our country have not caught up with our technologies. Equally important is that our understanding of the impact of telecommunications technologies on the social and emotional development of children and teens is also lagging.



As new technologies are made available to children, no one asks the hard questions "is this healthy for them?" "is this ethical?". Just because they can use it, doesn't mean they should. A simple example concerns a new website that a number of children, as young as 12 and 13, have been telling us about recently. BlogTV.com; is presented as "social broadcasting". It enables anyone with a video camera to broadcast live on the Internet to visitors with whom the person broadcasting can also chat in real time. Why is it OK for children to broadcast themselves live to strangers across the Internet who can also chat with them? Children are too young to fully understand the risks and the technology is too irresistible for many of them.

Since June, law enforcement has successfully shut down the spam operations of several major national and international spammers.

In the last few days, those of us who administer our school's anti-spam servers have probably noticed a significant drop in the volume of spam hitting our accounts. This was due to the arrest of a team of spammers, a Texan and New Zealander, who are described as the "most prolific spammers of our time." [[Read the full story](#)]

Read more about the recent arrests of spammers:

[Ralsky confidant agrees to rat out notorious spam gang](#)

[Seattle Spam King Dark Mailer faces 47-month sentence](#)

As Children Online prepares to write a letter to our new President-Elect and

As always, we welcome your comments. Our telephone number for Children Online is 413-214-1225.

Best wishes,
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

Please contact Marje or Doug at marjem@childrenonline.org or dougf@childrenonline.org. for further information on our consulting services.

Hoping for a Better Future

Doug and I feel very privileged to be able to travel the country talking to parents and schools about children and teens' use of technology. While our typical presentation lasts about 1 and ½ hours long, we often spend much longer talking and brainstorming with parents. Parents are serious about guiding their children and intent on understanding the many issues their children face online or on the phone. However, hearing story after story of kids and teens being harassed, scammed, exploited or tricked can cause us to become outraged and ask some very simple questions.

- Why do young children and teens have open access to porn sites and adult gambling sites?
- Why are young teens able to sit in front of a camera in their bedrooms making it possible for other online users to watch everything they do on sites such as Blogtv?
- Why are children and teens uploading and downloading humiliating and disturbing videos on YouTube for millions to see?
- Why do children as young as 8 have access to sites such as Facebook, or MySpace?
- Why do adult predators still have access to children on the Internet?
- Why is it allowed for visitors to post highly sexual content or comments to girls on web sites such as Stardoll.com, which are intended for young teens?

I grew up in the late 70's when the rule of the neighborhood was to come home when the streetlights came on. Once home, I did not have access to my friends except on the

his administration, we hope all of you will also feel inspired to write letters to your Senators, Congressional representatives, as well as our new President, and express your outrage that the laws in our country offer so little protection for our children online. Include specific examples if you can. Demand that attention be given to our nation's children on the "streets" in which they spend most of their time, the Internet!

Good luck!

About Children Online

Children Online offers innovative and comprehensive workshops on Internet safety and online education to students, parents, faculty and administrators. Our approach, unique in the field of Internet safety, combines a thorough understanding of Internet technologies, child development and counseling, to

phone or during sleepovers. TV was still relatively wholesome, although my brother and I were banned from watching "Love American Style" and "Saturday Night Live." Today my son lives in a very urban Chicago neighborhood where he is not allowed outside without me or another adult in the vicinity. I see other parents watching their children carefully outside, but I can't assume that my son will be safe outside of my watch. Cable TV today has hundreds of channels and network TV is not so wholesome anymore.

Kids today have 24-hour access to friends or peers through the Internet, on the phone or through texting. It can be literally impossible for teens to find "down" time away from friends and social pressure. Many teens have unlimited access to computers and are online late into the night in chatrooms, gaming sites or texting "friends". These same teens have access to porn sites, gambling sites and LiveTV sites where they can broadcast themselves live from their bedrooms all over the world. With access to a cell phone, children and teens essentially walk around with hand held computers linking them to videos, chatting, shopping, texting, and surfing the web.

Have we changed so much as a society that we are not outraged that children and teens have open and unlimited access to the exciting and very risky elements of technology? With today's technology, children are being marketed to while watching television, movies, when online or when on their cell phones. Brilliant "social" engineers have quickly learned that our children are very easy targets for scams. With the advent of social networking sites, phishers have found a very real money source in young teens. Unsuspecting kids follow links and exciting pop-ups not realizing the risk they may be taking. Some links might lead to gaming sites, gambling sites, soft porn sites, or marketing sites. Some links lead unsuspecting children to reveal personal information that risks their online identity.

It is easy to look at the owners of internet sites such as YouTube, Facebook or MySpace as callous with no regard for anything but the financial bottom line. And for some it is true. However, with little to no federal regulation or oversight, there is no system in place to ensure that children/teens and even adults are not exploited, harassed or

focus on the impact of the internet on the social, emotional and language development of young people.

Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe, experts in technology, counseling and education, work together to provide invaluable research and tools for parents and schools with practical real-life solutions to the issues faced by young people online. Since 1997, Marje and Doug have spoken to thousands of students, teachers and parents. They have several publications in the area of Internet safety and offer a free online newsletter. More detailed information can be found at ChildrenOnline.org.

scammed everyday online. Parents are left trying to create rules, structures and boundaries for their children. However, understanding the transforming effect of the technology for children and teens can be daunting. Many parents may not fully understand the risks children face online or the many ways children and teens can be exploited or scammed. Asking children and teens to turn off computers or cell phones can be impossible. They view their computers or phones as necessary to their lives and can become frantic at the thought of losing their connection to their world of friends. However, it is important to create rules and boundaries for our children. We need to educate our children and ourselves about the risks online. Without more federal regulation and oversight, we are left alone as parents and teachers and caring adults to create boundaries and rules for this ever-changing technology.

I am hopeful that the great inspiration and hope that comes with our new President-Elect inspires us to become motivated to take action. I hope that we begin fighting for online oversight and regulations to begin creating some safety for our children and teens.

Marje Monroe

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