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A Safety Net for the Internet:

A Parent/Legal Guardian's Guide

What Parents/Legal Guardians Should Know:

"Blogging," "friending," "tagging," and "Googling" are all part of the new language of cyberspace. These are verbs children use every day to talk about what they do online. It is important that parents understand this new language and provide their children with guidance in navigating the Internet. The Internet is a wonderful tool for children to do research, play games, and communicate with family and friends. Unfortunately, just as people can be rude, obnoxious, and exploitative in person, the anonymity of the Internet can sometimes amplify poor behavior and create an environment that is not always appropriate for children.

Get Involved and Set Rules:

The best way to ensure any child's safety on the Internet is for the child's parent/legal guardian to be involved and to set rules for the child's use of the Internet.

- If a child's parent/legal guardian doesn't know how to access the Internet, ask at the Mount Olive Public Library Reference Desk for assistance and/or for a schedule of free classes on how to use the Internet, if offered.
- Spend time with the child when he/she is online.
- Ask the child to share his/her blogs or online profiles with his/her parent/legal guardian.
- Monitor the amount of time this child spends online. Excessive use of online services, especially late at night, may signal a potential problem. The same parenting skills that apply to the "real world" also apply online.
- Set rules for any child's use of the Internet.

Tips for Parents

Here are some other things you can do to help keep a child/children safe online:

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Privacy:

- Educate each child about the importance of keeping personal information private.
- Discourage children from giving out personal information such as their last name, age, home address, school name, or telephone number without parental/legal guardian approval.
- Discourage each child from sharing his/her online passwords with anyone other than his/her parent/legal guardian.
- Familiarize yourself with how your child's information is being used online. Read the privacy policies of the websites your child visits regularly.

Social Networking:

Encourage your child to be honest about his/her age when signing up for social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Second Life, and MySpace) or blogs. These sites and services often have minimum age requirements and may not be appropriate for all children.

Posting Images/Videos:

Discourage your child from posting photos or videos online without parental/legal guardian approval.

Inappropriate Messages:

Discourage your child from responding to messages that are suggestive, obscene, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate.

Meeting Strangers:

Don't allow your child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone he/she meets over the Internet without parental/legal guardian approval. Remember that people online may not be who they say they are.

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Other Tips:

Advertising and Inaccurate Information. Teach your child to be a critical consumer of information. Make sure your child knows that not everything he/she reads on the Internet is true.

Child Exploitation. If any adult or child becomes aware of the transmission of child pornography, report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678.

Communication. Talk with your child about his/her favorite websites, how much time he/she should spend online, what information he/she can share with online friends and what kinds of sites you want him/her to visit.

For more tips, please go to the following websites: ConnectSafely.org or fbi.gov.