

Internet Safety Program Combats Online Predators

by NewsUSA

(NewsUSA) - While the Internet offers a world of information for kids, it also presents great dangers from online sexual predators.

Every year, one in five children receives a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet. With millions of children in chat rooms and sending instant messages, parents must take action to protect their kids.

A recent survey of young people revealed the following statistics about how parents are supervising their children's online time: More than half of young people (53 percent) say their parents never ask them about whom they are talking to on the Internet, and 55 percent say their parents never surf the Internet with them.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America has partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to create NetSmartz (www.netsmartz.org), an interactive, educational safety resource for children ages 5 to 17. Parents, guardians, educators and law enforcement personnel can access age-appropriate, 3-D activities to teach children how to stay safer on the Internet.

Here are some Internet safety tips for parents:

Keep the computer in the family room or another open area of your home. If children use chat or e-mail, talk to them about never meeting in person with anyone they "met" online. Know who your children are exchanging e-mail with, and only let them use chat areas when you can supervise. Limit chatroom access to child-friendly chat sites. Let your children show you what they do online. Visit their favorite Web sites. If you suspect online "stalking" or sexual exploitation of a child, report it to your local law-enforcement agency or call the CyberTipline at (800) 843-5678. With the support of Microsoft, BGCA also has implemented the Club Tech program in more than 3,700 Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide. Club Tech's goal is to "technology enable" every club by providing software, curriculum and computer training for staff and youth.

New technology centers are becoming available online every week, teaching basic computer skills and Internet safety.

For more information, visit www.bgca.org or www.netsmartz.org.

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