

# CARING NETWORK BULLETIN



June 2005

## Your window on the world!?



Do you remember the children's song "Be careful little eyes what you see"? Well, never before have we had the ability to see the world right before our eyes through the power of the internet. Home computers connected to the internet are standard equipment these days. This powerful information tool is the "tower of Babel" of our generation linking the world at lightning speed with the new "cyber language". Information and world events are almost instantly shown, commented on, and fed to searching minds. Online activity is not limited to the computer only. Cell phones, personal digital assistants and some video game systems have online and "texting" capabilities.

Children are encouraged to get connected to enhance their learning. A trip to the library is no longer necessary when you can access information within the comfort of your own home. You can travel through a virtual museum, or research the topic for your school project, not to mention the helpful sites and options offered to home schoolers. You can do your shopping and banking on-line. You can book your airline tickets, check flight status, and map out your holiday at your computer. Teens, seniors and those in isolation marvel at how they can now stay in touch, sometimes in "real time". The possibilities are seemingly endless.

There is also a dark side to this amazing technology. There are over 2 million known pornography sites (Source: URL's (Uniform Resource Locator, or global address for documents and sites), with 2,500 new sites coming online every week, most not controlled by law. Just as the use of television is monitored in our homes, so should the use of the internet. Nine out of 10 children aged between eight and 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet. In most cases, the sex sites were accessed unintentionally when a child, often in the process of doing homework, used a seemingly innocent sounding word to search for information or pictures. (Source - London School of Economics January 2002)

It is not only our children who are at risk. Adults who may start out researching a home improvement site or shopping online may find themselves on an unintended web site. Lonely husbands and wives can easily click on a link to the online dating services, which just happens to pop up. One thing leads to another and before long the online chats to the new

friend lead to a face-to-face meeting and the marriage is in jeopardy. Our community, unfortunately, is not immune to this, judging from actual cases. Being only a "click away" from something is very dangerous in a moment of weakness or curiosity.

The benefits of access to the internet are many and may outweigh the risks. However, it is prudent to be aware of the dangers so that any experience on the internet is a positive one. Our children can be taught responsible internet behaviour but it requires that we be aware and involved as parents. As for ourselves, we must be aware of the temptations involved and flee from those things we know are a temptation

## Internet Safety Tips

- *Keep any computer with Internet accessibility in a central room in the house, like a family room or kitchen – not in a bedroom, or closed-off room.*
- *Teach your child how to get out of an online experience that is becoming uncomfortable by clicking on the "back" key and logging off, and telling you about it. In order for your child to come to you with this experience they need to feel comfortable doing so and not scared of your reaction.*
- *Have your child teach you what they know about the Internet and have them walk you through their favourite sites. Starting at about age 10 kids may become more Internet savvy than their parents.*
- *Become Internet savvy so you can view sites visited and follow trails from certain chat lines.*
- *Monitor your child's chat line friends just as you would if they were physically in your home. In reality, they are!*
- *Instruct your children never to give out their name, phone number, address, name of school or name of friends, unless they have your permission. Any information given out becomes accessible to anyone including "predators" and "cyber bullies", making their job much easier.*
- *Children/teens should never arrange to meet a "friend" they have made on-line. You have no way of knowing that someone is who they claim to be. The 12 year old girl involved in the discussion in the chat room may actually be a middle-aged man. Things are not as they appear!!*
- *Choose a genderless name for chat rooms*
- *Purchase a Parental Control software, eg. "Net Nanny". Some browsers such as Microsoft Explorer have some restriction capabilities, filtering out spam and pop-ups.*
- ***Options available:** Filter out sexually explicit images; Monitor your child's online activity, Restrict the amount of time spent on the Internet.*

- *Block your personal information from being posted or emailed.*
- **Specific software programs available:**  
*"Predatory Guard" – scans messages and notices when text may be threatening to the user. "eMailTrackerPro" – allows you to trace email back to sender. "McAfee Parental Controls" offers chat filtering protection for Instant messaging and chat rooms.*
- *Adhere to the same standards of behaviour and conversation online that we follow in real life.*

Note: A team of young Australian Christadelphians has recently developed an Internet Service Provider that performs the filtering at the server. The product is called **WebShield** and the website is listed under resources.

#### **Some behaviours that may be worth investigating:**

- Family members switching screens when you walk in the room.
- Late night computer use – Chatting should be restricted to certain times of the day
- Phone calls from people you don't know asking for your child.
- Changes in behaviour: your child is unusually upset with an internet interruption; changes in sleeping habits; distancing themselves from the family; staying in their room more than usual; exhibiting increasingly disrespectful behaviour.

#### **Internet Jargon**

**Blogs** – Personal web sites on a particular topic or interest; or may simply function as a person's journal or diary. Difference being, everyone in cyber space can read this diary.

**Xangas** - A community of online diaries and journals allowing people to share their personal feelings. Churning over feelings and thoughts for a whole evening with a bunch of other teens can be empowering, leading to behaviour they wouldn't have otherwise undertaken.

**Cyberbullying** – Using information and communication technology to harass and express hostility that is harmful to others.

**Instant Messages** – Technology that notifies users when a friend is online. Allows for real time text conversation.

**Chat** - A place or page in a web site or online service where people can "chat" with each other using text messages, which are displayed to those in the "chat room." Chatting is one of the most popular uses of the Internet. Generally, the participants remain anonymous, using nicknames or pseudonyms to identify themselves online. **Note: all people in the chat room, including people you don't know, can view conversation.**

#### **A call to Holiness**

The internet may seem like a secret world where we can conduct ourselves in ways we wouldn't otherwise. However, we are reminded in 1 Pet 1:14-16; "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

#### **2005 Caring Network Annual Meeting and Workshop**

Sis. Mary Styles submitted the following summary of the workshop in which she and Bro. David took part.

"We had a very profitable day at the Caring Network Spring Workshop with three periods devoted to an interactive discussion format surrounding issues which confront our families. Following is a summary of the last session which presented a hierarchy of responses to problems which arise in family life."

- 1<sup>st</sup> response - **Stop and Think followed by Use Your Resources: Prayer; Family; Ecclesia; Outside Help.**
- **Confront the Problem** by clarifying the issues and asking for explanations.
- **Keep Communication Open** while expressing our concerns and fears as well as our love and concern.
- **Don't Beat Ourselves Up** over the problem but do take responsibility, look after ourselves and take care of other important relationships.
- **Deal With Problems ASAP.**
- Part of working through family issues means **Let Them Experience the Consequences** by involving them in the process. At the same time we have to Make Sure that WE Can Live With the Consequences Ourselves.
- **Teach Responsibility and Model It** as well as focusing on a particular child and **making them feel special.**

"We came away feeling encouraged in our walk with our families as we endeavour to raise them to be godly, responsible and responsive individuals who are part of a larger spiritual family in Christ " 'of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' "

#### **Caring Network Resources**

- **Christadelphian Care-Line**, 1 866 823-1039 toll-free
- **www.caringnetwork.ca** Caring Network Website
- **<http://www.webshield.net.au/index.html>**

**Non Christadelphian sites** (and sources for this bulletin).

- [www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm) (Parent's Guide to Internet Safety)
- <http://kids.getnetwise.org/>
- <http://www.netsmartzkids.org>
- <http://www.safeteens.com/safeteens>
- <http://www.cyberbullying.ca/>

**REQUEST** Please send us suggestions for future topics, useful resources, or comments about what we have written. Contact Sis. Jennifer Daniel, 604 469-2392, or 4 Foxwood Court, Port Moody, BC v3h 4w7, or [jenniferdaniel@telus.net](mailto:jenniferdaniel@telus.net)