

Nancy McBride Launches NSTeens.org

URL: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/CyberHoodWatch/2008/09/16/Nancy-McBride-National-Safety-Director-for-NCMEC>

Summary:

First, as a reminder to all those listening, the [Cyberhood Watch](#) now has three websites which serve as centers for the Cyberhood communities with new information available regularly from around the world. Be sure to remember to check those sites to keep up to date.

The guest for today's show was is Nancy McBride, who has had a huge impact on both of the hosts early in their radio careers. Nancy has worked with Adam Walsh since the beginning of the [Adam Walsh Center](#), which raises the awareness of what happens when a child is abducted. She is also the National Safety Director for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ([NCMEC](#)), working out of the Florida branch. She has also written a couple of books and some articles as well.

The mission of NCMEC is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation. As the National Safety Director, Nancy always stresses that the second part of that mission statement is just as important as the first, as it is the role of adults to protect our children. Several new campaigns have been started recently, including one focusing on children getting to and from school safely. That campaign can be seen on www.netsmartz.org. The website also has information from other campaigns.

According to Nancy, a responsible "cybercitizen" *is someone who acts in a way that they would want someone to act towards them*. If you are ashamed of someone seeing your online actions or you wouldn't want someone to do the same thing to you as you are doing to them, then you are not being a responsible cybercitizen. Some actions are even illegal.

A lot of teens don't realize that once something is posted on the internet, it is always available. This is true even if the information is deleted or removed. This can and does impact the person's future, as many colleges, employers, and other companies research a person online, to learn more about them. This is why it is important to be a responsible cybercitizen.

In order to stay safe and be responsible, it is the parents' job to make sure the teen doesn't post any personal information which could be used to link them to their hometown or school. It is also just as important for teens to restrict their behavior on the internet. They should not be chatting, e-mailing, or posting about sex or indecent/illegal behavior. All of the above could be put together and result in dangerous circumstances.

The number one way to do these things are to communicate openly with your children and keep tabs on them. Make sure you have candid, open discussions with your children often and explain to them why you are having them. The number one way to keep kids safe online is to communicate with them. Just pulling the plug on them doesn't work anymore.

This brought about the next important topic in today's show: cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is the use of the internet to harass or bully others. In order to save kids from being cyber-bullied, the most important thing to teach kids is tell a trusted adult what is going on. When it comes to bullies, either online or in person, it's important to not react to them in anyway. Instead of saying things back and forth, just go tell that trusted adult who will help you with the situation.

Cyber-bullying can become such a large problem for a few reasons. First, unlike kids fighting on the playground, there is no "bell" signaling the end of recess or the start of the next class. In those situations, the bullying is interrupted by an outside source and everyone has an opportunity to cool down a bit. Online there are no interruptions and things can escalate further. In addition, there are no adults around to break up a fight online as there are on the playground. If something happens and the kids don't tell an adult the bullying can just go on continuously. Without intervention, the situation just gets worse and has been known to cause extreme personality changes and even suicide.

There are several programs that NCMEC runs to help kids be responsible and safe online. One program was [Netsmartz](#), which was already mentioned and is a great resource for both younger kids and teenagers to use for both online and real-life situations. There are both fictional characters and stories there, as well as real-life stories from people who have been in dangerous situations. This website has really made a difference.

One real-life story on the website is from Julie, a girl who met a man in church then started an online-relationship with him. Eventually she decided to run away with him, and it turned out that he was a convicted murderer. Julie was able to get out of the situation unhurt; however her story brings up several important points in online safety. First, dangerous adults usually patrol for kids in a lot of places. In this example it was church, however it could also be online chat rooms that are geared for kids or teenagers, forums, or a variety of other venues. Secondly, these people try their best to come off as likeable and often times will try to win the parents over as well. They do not want to be detected as a dangerous person. For this reason, it is important for parents to communicate with their kids and question any adult who is focusing excessively on a child. Often times parents will admit after their child is abducted how much they liked the abductor and how nice they were being to their child. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Another important point from Julie's story is the false hope that kids, especially teen girls, often have in these situations. They think and feel that the dangerous person really cares for them and they are looking for that sort of attention. This is only a hope, however, and makes them more vulnerable for attack.

Another campaign by NCMEC is [Take 25](#), a program to help people recognize National Missing Children's Day on May 25th, which was designated by President Reagan. The idea is for people to set aside 25 minutes to talk to their children about safety. [Take 25](#) creates a variety of programs across the country that helped raise awareness and has been very successful.

If you are a person who is interested in helping the effort to make the internet safer for children, there are several things you can do. One thing is to support the NCMEC and other programs/organizations that are around who are working towards that goal. Another thing that can be done is to tell the officials when you think someone is being victimized. Lastly, of course, learn as much as you can and talk with your children.

Thanks,

Dave and Bill

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