



# Reaching Out

## Norristown Area Communities That Care for Youth

Keeping Youth Safe & Drug Free

Spring 2011



### Spotlight: Keeping Youth Alcohol Free

Norristown CTC has planned many alcohol prevention activities this spring.

On April 5, our youth subcommittee hosted a "sticker shock" event at Swede's Beverage. This involved placing warning stickers on cases of beer alerting purchasers to the penalties for providing alcohol to youth under the age of 21.

On April 26, Jordan Burnham, an award winning speaker, addressed Norristown Area High School (NAHS) students about the dangers of underage drinking, depression and the connection between the two.

On April 27, CTC hosted the DUI Simulator (see photo above) for NAHS juniors and provided activities to illustrate the consequences of drinking and driving. The DUI Simulator returned to NAHS on May 18 and 19 so the senior class could experience the same message prior to the prom.

Additionally, on May 3, CTC and Gotwals Elementary illustrated how dreams for the future can soar when we make good choices with an afternoon balloon launch.

### What Every Parent Needs to Know About Social Networking Sites

*By Officer Brian Kozera, Norristown Police Department and School Resource Officer, Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy*

If you are reading this article you are already behind in your knowledge of what your children are exposed to on the Internet. Instructing your children on how to conduct themselves in cyberspace is an important part of your job as a parent, so it's time to catch up! Would you hand your kids the keys to your car without being confident that they have the skills they need to be safe on the road? Allowing them to navigate social networking sites without your supervision and guidance is no different.



⇒ *Did you know that you must be at least 13 years of age to be a member of a social networking site and that from ages 13-18 a parent must provide consent?*

⇒ *Are you aware that your children have access to the Internet, and therefore social networking sites, through PlayStation, Wii and Nintendo DS?*

#### What is the purpose of social networking sites?

Facebook and other social networking sites were created to provide adults with a way to stay in touch when they do not see one another often. They allow users to share pictures and information about their lives and invite others to parties and other social gatherings.

#### How are social networking sites misused?

Kids who use Facebook are in constant communication even though they see one another every day. Many are checking sites on their phones during class and not paying attention to their teachers. Some use it as a place to vent their frustrations and spread rumors or instigate fights with large numbers of people at one time. Small incidents that should be between two peers often become blown out of proportion and others begin to take sides in the disagreement. Bullying behavior is common on social networking sites and can cause great distress to those who are targeted.

*Social networking sites continued on page 4*

# Tips on How to Keep Children Safe to and from School

By Detective Jean Morrison, East Norriton Police Department

Many parents worry about how to keep their children safe when they aren't with them or other concerned and responsible adults on the way to and from school. Here are some tips:

- ◆ **Buddy up and stay together.** Whether your child is walking to school or riding the bus, make sure they have a friend who makes the trip with them.
- ◆ **Sit in the front.** If they are riding the bus, suggest that they sit close to the front and are aware of the stop both before and after theirs.
- ◆ **Don't take short cuts.** Use main roads and stay on the sidewalks with the crossing guards.
- ◆ **Be mindful of people's property.** Do not cut across people's yards or driveways.
- ◆ **Don't linger.** Walk home as quickly as possible.
- ◆ **Use crossing guards as a resource.** They are representatives of the school and law enforcement.
- ◆ **Establish a block parent.** If there are one or two parents who are always home and on the lookout after school, ask them if they would be willing to watch out for your children as well.
- ◆ **Report any incidents to the bus driver and a school official.** Unless you report a problem, there is no chance of stopping it.
- ◆ **Call the police if, while walking to school, your child encounters an issue with an adult who is not affiliated with the school.** Also alert the school to the problem.
- ◆ **Follow up to see what action has taken place.**
- ◆ **Do not coach your child to retaliate.** Let the school handle it or you are likely to make things worse. Your child may end up being the one who gets in trouble even though they did not initiate the problem.

## Cell Phone Safety Tips

By Detective Jean Morrison, East Norriton Police Department

- ◆ Set guidelines around your child's phone use. Let them know what the consequences will be if they violate them.
- ◆ Monitor your child's phone and the calls that are coming in and going out.
- ◆ Look carefully at phone numbers that you do not know, especially if they are coming in late at night.
- ◆ Do not hesitate to take away your child's phone if they misuse it.
- ◆ If your child receives threatening texts, do not delete them. Report the incidents to the school and the police.
- ◆ Many children now have web access on their phones. Investigate settings that allow you to block certain sites or prevent your children from receiving calls between certain hours.
- ◆ If you cannot arrange with your service provider to have phones turned off at certain times, have your children turn their phones into you at bedtime.
- ◆ Be sure that your children are aware that anything they send over the phone lines can be broadcast to the world. They should not circulate any pictures or messages that they would not want their grandmother to see.



## Computer Safety Tips

*By Detective Jean Morrison, East Norriton Police Department*

- ◆ The computer should be in a common area in your home where you can monitor its use.
- ◆ Establish basic guidelines for computer use: what sites are acceptable and what sites are not, when can they use it and for how many hours in a day.
- ◆ Learn the ins and outs of your computer. Let your children assist you with this. Make this positive time for you to communicate with your children. Ask them what is going on in their lives while they show you their computer skills. If they play computer games, play with them.
- ◆ Monitor what they do on the computer. There is software that you can purchase to assist you with this. Get their passwords and e-mail addresses.
- ◆ Have parental controls on your computer. These allow you to restrict the sites your children visit as well as the hours that they use it. Many computer service providers (such as Comcast) can assist you with this.
- ◆ Check social networking sites. If your child is on one, monitor it regularly and “friend” them.
- ◆ Learn how to access the history setting and check it regularly. Set it for 45 days. This will allow you to see what sites they have visited and if they have set up additional social network profiles that you are not aware of.
- ◆ If your children violate computer guidelines, there must be consequences. Take the power cord.
- ◆ Do your research before you buy a computer, PlayStation, Wii or Nintendo DS. All of these have wireless centers which you can block. [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com) has reviews on the various systems.
- ◆ Make sure they know that any pictures they post or messages they write are public.
- ◆ If your child is bullied on the Internet, do not delete the message. Report it to the school and/or the police. Cyberbullying is harassment under the law.



## If Your Child is Home Alone...

*By Detective Jean Morrison, East Norriton Police Department*

It is always best for your child to be under the care and/or supervision of a concerned adult when they are not with you, whether it be a teacher, relative, or after school activity coordinator. Trading off child-care duties with a friend or neighbor is always a good alternative. Nevertheless, it may be necessary for some middle and high school students to be home alone for a period of time before their parents return home from work. Because statistics show that young people are at the greatest risk between the hours of 3–6 p.m., here are some tips for keeping your child safe:

- ◆ The door should be closed and locked at all times.
- ◆ Your child should not open the door for anyone, even for a delivery.
- ◆ If they receive a phone call and someone asks to speak to a parent they should say “Mom is cooking and cannot come to the phone.” A child should never say that no adult is home.

**Who can find the time to keep up with their kids lives?**

**[www.FindYour25thHour.org](http://www.FindYour25thHour.org)**

Norristown Area  
**Communities  
That Care**



**for Youth**

KEEPING YOUTH  
SAFE & DRUG FREE

Communities That Care  
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Norristown, PA 19403  
610-630-2111 ext. 236  
info@norristownctc.org

**Communities That Care (CTC)** is a risk-focused approach to reducing adolescent problem behaviors through community mobilization and planning. Local citizens and community leaders work together to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing and enhance the protective factors that can shield youngsters from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to step ahead of the problems with far-reaching and long-lasting solutions.

For more information, visit our website at [www.NorristownCTC.org](http://www.NorristownCTC.org).

## **SAVE THE DATE: Annual Norristown Youth Rally**

Saturday, June 18, from Noon–3 p.m. at Greater Norristown PAL, 340 Harding Blvd.

This is a free event reinforcing a drug, alcohol and violence-free youth message.  
Free hot dogs, lemonade, soft pretzels, games, activities, and crafts!

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

### **What can you do to keep your children safe?**

*Social networking sites continued from page 1*

- ◆ If possible, understand the technology before your children have access to it.
- ◆ If they are more technologically savvy than you, allow your children to teach you what they know. Do this in a positive way by showing interest in their online activities. Establish a trusting and positive relationship surrounding this part of their lives.
- ◆ Friend them on their social networking site. Know their e-mail addresses and make sure you have their usernames and passwords.
- ◆ Set up safety tools and use monitoring software, such as Guardian.
- ◆ Remember, you have the power of the paycheck and can take away your children's social networking and/or computer privileges.
- ◆ Pay attention if they become angry or sad after spending time on the computer or click off as soon as you come near.
- ◆ Report any online harassment to the abuse line of the provider you are using (such as [abuse@aol.com](mailto:abuse@aol.com)), as well as to your child's school and the police, if appropriate.
- ◆ Alert the police and school officials to any online bullying. Cyberbullying is harassment under the law.

