

Family Insider—*Second Life*

Table of Contents

- Family Insider 1
- Miss NJ Joins i-SAFE 2
- Get Involved 3
- Mobile Social Networking 4
- i-SAFE and NASRO Working Together ... 4
- NAC Corner 5
- Online Safety Tips 6
- Did You Know! 6
- Today's Cyber Predators 6
- Government Actions 7



We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.

~Stacia Tauscher

Second Life—catchy title for a virtual community. Just as the name implies, it offers online users a chance for a second life—a virtual online one. Online users are identified as “residents” and interact with each other via an on-screen representation of themselves through avatars. One chooses an avatar, and its accompanying personality, so in Second Life, you can be anything or anybody you want. Residents can explore their surroundings in the online community, meet others, socialize, participate in activities, create, trade, and purchase virtual property/services from one another. Second Life is a large community boasting eight million accounts (although many are not active). Second Life isn’t the only “virtual reality community.” Others are Active Worlds, There, and Entropia Universe.

Second Life is age-restricted to adults 18 and over. However, there is a monitored Teen Second Life for 13-17 year old. According to the Teen Second Life Web site, “It’s more than a video game and much more than an Internet chat program—it’s a boundless world of surprise and adventure that encourages teens to work together and use their imaginations.”

Many teens and adults find the free and open nature of Second Life appealing. They see it as a chance to explore varying aspects of who they are by trying on an alternative identity. This can be both freeing, but dangerous. For example, the very nature of Second Life allows for exploration and sexual freedom. Adult content can be seen and discovered relatively easily on the site. Avatars can even appear nude. Online gambling and other adult situations and language are acceptable elements of Second Life. While the Teen Second Life has rules about inappropriate



material/conversations and states that only teens are allowed, there is nothing to prevent adults from creating accounts and communicating with teens, increasing the threat posed by predators. The interactive, anonymous nature of this medium makes cyber bullying an issue to be concerned about as well.

Participants in Second Life and Teen Second Life can create and market objects, such as clothes, games, or just about anything they can imagine. Created “property” is protected as intellectual property, making the virtual world a place where residents can prosper from a thriving economic market. “Linden”

Continued on page 2

NAC Tracks

Does your family computer have gaming software installed?

A: Yes

B: No

Vote here




Second Life continued from page 1

dollars, the official currency used in this virtual world can be converted at an online currency exchange into U.S. dollars via credit card at the rate of about 300 to 1. A programmer in Australia recently created a game for Second Life avatars which became so popular that he has now licensed it to a publisher who will soon release it for video game players and cell phones.

Even real-world companies are getting involved in Second Life. Last April, Coca-Cola launched its “Virtual Thirst” contest with the help of the marketing firms crayon and Millions of Us, who ask us to “imagine a world in which a simple vending machine could dispense—not Coca-Cola—but the ESSENCE of Coca-Cola: refreshment, joy, unity, experience.” Sears offers customers an opportunity to visualize purchases planned for real homes. Users can try out layouts for kitchens, entertainment systems, home theatres, and garage products. Ultimately, the entire Sears catalog will be available to allow customers to see how their design ideas and the new products will look in their own spaces. Information Weekly reported in Feb., 2007 that Toyota, Circuit City, Dell, and Adidas have all set up shop in the Second Life virtual world.

Second Life is also an emerging trend in the world of education. Part of Second Life’s attraction to educators and students is that it allows them to interact with each other over large distances, allows for enrichment of existing curriculum, and expansion on current educational goals. Participants can host lectures or conduct projects online, attend Web quests, practice foreign languages, visit realistic virtual countries,

and explore the inner workings of politics, governments, commerce, and business. The Second Life platform allows students to practice new skills and ideas, learning from their mistakes in preparation for real-world experiences. An example would be a Second Life courtroom scenario allowing a student-resident to prosecute a trial. Others are using the virtual environment to mimic real-world problems and issues such as natural catastrophes to provide experience in various situations. The possibilities for creating and running through scenarios are endless. 



It is important to understand that virtual communities such as this are growing in popularity. Your children know about it; so should you.

Miss NJ Motivated to Promote Internet Safety

Amy Polumbo, the newly-crowned Miss New Jersey, joins iSAFE in a campaign to educate students and parents about online dangers. Amy made “Internet safety” part of her platform for her reign, and ironically soon became a victim herself. In her first weeks as Miss New Jersey, Amy was pressured to give up her crown by someone who lifted photos from her personal webpage, doctored the pictures, and sent them to Pageant officials in a blackmail attempt. Amy says she now knows first hand how easy it is for someone to be taken advantage of on the Internet. “This can happen to anybody at any time. Together with iSAFE, I hope “to reach tens of thousands of students across New Jersey and nationwide,” she says.

Amy’s year-long Internet safety campaign with iSAFE will include being featured in Public Service Announcements (PSA) for broadcast on radio and television stations nationwide, classroom visits in New Jersey, conducting iSAFE i-PARENT Programs and community events, and to represent iSAFE in regional, state-wide, and national lobbying activities for Internet safety legislation.

“I chose Internet safety as my platform issue because I want to help young people after I saw a relative victimized on the Internet,” Amy says. As a teenager, Amy’s cousin became a victim to cyber bullies after she joined groups on social-networking sites that enticed her into using drugs.

continued on page 3

Miss NJ Motivated to Promote Internet Safety

continued from page 2

“Amy is a very courageous young woman,” says i-SAFE CEO and Program Director Teri Schroeder. “We are proud to have Amy join us in our effort to reach youth about the importance of safe and responsible use of the Internet. She can relate to this Internet-using generation with her valuable experience and insight.”

Amy grew up in Howell Township, New Jersey. With a great aptitude for helping others, she was actively involved with her school and community. She also performed in over 50 theatrical shows throughout her state, her favorite being “Maria” in West Side Story. She attends Wagner College in New York, where she is pursuing a degree in Musical Theatre with a minor in Psychology. Amy is a member of Actor’s Equity Association, and recently fulfilled a contract with Walt World Disney Entertainment, where she performed live as “Ariel” in Voyage of the Little Mermaid at MGM Studios.

Keep up with Amy during her busy and meaningful year. We have a special page about Amy on our Web site www.isafe.org.



Get Involved— Back to School

Summertime is winding down and school will soon be back in session. As you are thinking about all of the things your child needs to prepare for the new school year, don’t forget the equipment your child needs to use the Internet safely and responsibly. Of course, we are referring to Internet safety education. If you have a teen or tween, it is very likely that s/he will be using the Internet for school research, communicating with friends, and possibly even to take online classes. Does your child understand the dangers online and how to protect him/herself when communicating online? It is your job as a parent to ensure that your child knows how to use the Internet safely.

- **Educate yourself** – Watch the i-PARENT online training videos to learn more about Internet safety issues (<http://ilearn.isafe.org>)
- **Contact your child’s school** – Ask about the school’s plans for teaching Internet safety in the classroom and about their Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for technology use at school. Introduce the principal and administration to the i-SAFE Program by conducting a School Board Orientation presentation, which provides them with information on ways to implement the i-SAFE Program. The intended audience is exposed to i-SAFE’s unique Education and Outreach programs, and specifically how they can get

involved with i-SAFE.

- **Educate other parents** – Plan a one-hour i-PARENT Program presentation to educate other parents about Internet safety. Talk to parents and create an i-PARENT Board in your community to raise awareness about Internet safety, while ensuring that your kids are well prepared to travel the World Wide Web.

To obtain free materials for any of the above activities, visit the i-SAFE Web site (www.isafe.org), log in with your user name and password, and submit an Implementation Plan for the specified event.



Mobile Social Networking


Imagine being able to locate from your cell phone friends who are nearby, say, in a half-mile radius, so you can invite them to meet you for lunch or at the mall. New technology is making this a reality. Many of today's cell phones are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) that are capable of pinpointing your exact position. And soon, thanks to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules, all phones will be able to transmit your location so that emergency personnel can locate people who call 911 from their mobile phone.

Social mapping using cell phones and GPS technology determines a user's location and then broadcasts it to others who have been given permission to find that user. What a great way to connect with friends. Parents can keep track of where their kids are hanging out. While the benefits of this great new technology are appealing, it is important to remember that there are also dangers, like cyber bullies/stalkers and predators who can use this technology, too.

The features of each of these services differ. Some companies, like Loopt, require the user to give others permission to track your location. Others, such as Helio, require the user to actually beam their location each time they want their friends to know where they are located. Permission can be given or withdrawn at any time and the data is only available while the user remains at the given location—there is no history of your

travels. And, if someone does abuse the service, there is an electronic evidence trail that includes a phone number.

Sounds safe? Well, like Internet profiles and social-networking sites, many users are careless about the people they permit to know their personal information, or location. Kids also change friends often, increasing the possibility that personal info could end up in the wrong hands.

Technology is great! But, make sure that you and your kids know the risks and are equipped to protect yourself from the dangers that may be involved. 



i-SAFE and NASRO Working Together

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and i-SAFE have formed a partnership that gives NASRO members training, resources and materials to educate and empower students, parents, community members, and law enforcement across the country to be safe online. NASRO personnel will teach i-SAFE's dynamic K-12 curriculum in the classroom and promote i-SAFE Youth Empowerment and Outreach Campaigns in their communities.

The need for such programs stems from the rapid growth of the Internet, which has become a catalyst for the widespread victimization of children. Consider the latest results from i-SAFE's National Assessment Center (NAC) of online surveys submitted by 5th - 8th grade students nationwide:

- 87% of students say that they spend at least 1 hour per week on the Internet; 18% spend 10 hours or more on the Internet each week
- 52% of students stated that they use the Internet

“usually” or “often” when adults are not in the same room


- 18% of students said that they are most likely to do something on the Internet that is unsafe, inappropriate or illegal while they are at home
- 14% of students admit that they have visited gambling Web sites
- 4% of students reported that they have used the Internet to obtain drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes
- 11% of students stated that they have purchased illegally burned CDs from the Internet

NASRO members certified by i-SAFE, teach in the classroom and can be instrumental in raising awareness in the community by positively influencing students' online behavior. i-LEARN Online (<http://ilearn.isafe.org>) certifies NASRO members online through comprehensive video tutorials of Internet safety concepts which outlines

i-SAFE and NASRO Working Together continued from page 4

i-SAFE curricula for grades K-12, details outreach campaigns for students, parents, and law enforcement, and explains how to implement the i-SAFE Program.

Dr. Dick Caster, NASRO Executive Director says his organization that represents more than 9,000 law enforcement and educators firmly believes in i-SAFE's prevention-oriented Internet safety awareness programs. "They are powerful and an effective resource for teaching students how to use the Internet confidently and safely," Caster says. "Therefore, in keeping with NASRO's mission to create safe and secure learning environments and to provide preventive educational programs that contribute to the wellbeing of students, NASRO seeks to enhance Internet safety education, community out-

reach and youth empowerment efforts by developing a formal working relationship with i-SAFE." 



NAC Corner—Coming Back to Life



Back-to-school is just around the corner, and these final weeks of summer vacation hold precious moments of last-minute online recreation and amusement before homework and schoolwork take over life again.

While Second Life is sometimes referred to as a game, and its residents are mainly experienced online gamers, the Wikipedia online encyclopedia says this description is disputed. Second Life does not have points, scores, winners or losers, levels, an end-strategy, or most of the other characteristics of games, though it can be thought of as a game on a more basic level. It is a semi-structured virtual environment where characters undertake activities for the purpose of personal enjoyment. While residents and non-residents can debate that, our question is why would someone want to spend all that time online and lead a parallel "second life" in addition to one that we already have? Statistics from i-SAFE's National Assessment Center (NAC) may put this into perspective.

- 42% of 5-12 graders spend anywhere between 1-4 hours on the Internet. Another 20% spend between 5-9 hours on the Internet per week.
- Internet gaming (13% of all responses) was indicated as the number one activity of children in grades 5-8.


As children spend increasingly long hours on the Internet, more and more activities that were earlier done offline can now be done on the online (e.g. research, games, mailing, shopping.) It was only a matter of time before the rest of our lives caught on to this Internet migration.

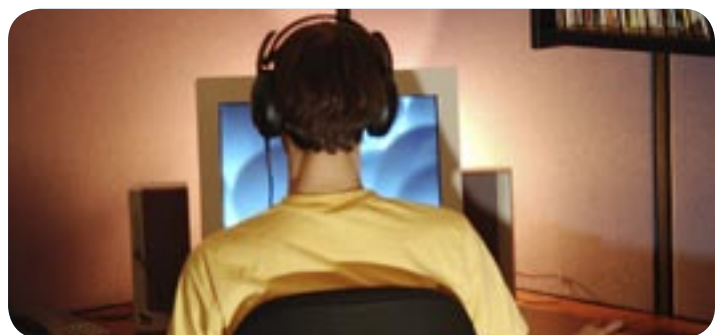
The anonymity of the Internet combined with easy accessibility make the Internet a convenient place for students to hang out with others, without the social stigma they encounter in their real world. According to NAC data,

- 11% of 5-12 graders report feeling lonely "Often" or "Constantly"
- 12% of 5-12 graders report feeling depressed "Often" or "Constantly"

Perhaps, the popularity of Second Life can be understood by what the musical group "Savage Garden" once said about the telephone:

On the telephone line, I am any height
I am any age I want to be
I could be a capped crusader, or space invader
And, you wouldn't know the difference
Or would you?

NAC Center 5-12 grade pre-assessment query of the 06-07 database on July 9, 2007 



Interactive Online Community Safety Tips

Keep the computer in an open room of the house where you can monitor your child's actions online.

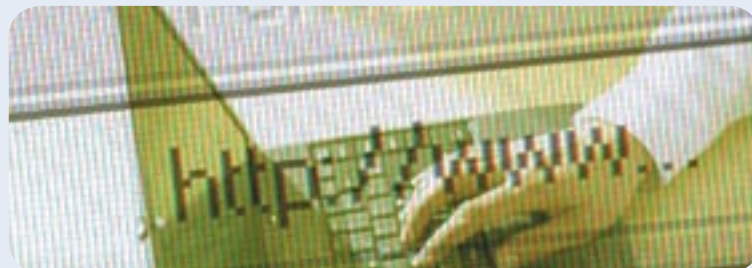
Evaluate the Web site and follow site age restrictions. Read the site's privacy policy and code of conduct. Any site intended for users over 18 pose the most risks for underage users.

Spend time online with your child to learn about the activities and interactions they're having in the online community.

Discuss the dangers of communicating with strangers online – Online friends are strangers, not “real” friends. Remind your children to never reveal personal information online or meet an online friend in person; and, if they are asked to do so, to notify you immediately.


Remind your children that they are never to use credit cards or make purchases online without parental permission and assistance.

Choose appropriate screen names and avatars that do not reveal personal information or potentially invite harassment.



Teach your child how to deal with cyber bullies

- Ignore the cyber bully. Never fight back
- Take a break and come back later
- Block or mute the harasser
- Report offenders to the Web site

Ensure that your child knows how to report inappropriate or dangerous content – Notify the Web site by clicking on the “Report Abuse” link. If there is no link, look for a “Contact Us” link. If you suspect someone is a criminal or predator, print out a copy of the communication and Web site address, and report it to your local law enforcement agency. 

Today's Cyber Predator


A different “face” of the cyber predator is emerging, according to research conducted by Professor David Finkelhor at University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center.

The research indicates a vast majority (80%) of cyber predators go to sexually-oriented chat rooms and are quite explicit about their intentions. They engage in conversations with children and groom victims who are “vulnerable and are looking for romance, adventure, sexual information, and understanding.”

Finkelhor's research states that in 73% of Internet sex crimes, the children meet with the predator on “multiple occasions and

for multiple sexual encounters.” And his study shows that half of the victims were described as “being in love with or feeling close friendship” with the predator; many ran away from home to be with the person met online.

Guarding personal information may not be enough to avoid these predators.

i-SAFE recommends that children should never talk about sex online with strangers. Better yet, stay out of sexual-oriented sites altogether. Report to law enforcement any sexual advances or requests for risqué photos. And, even if the sexual chat isn't directed toward them, children should know how to recognize and report attempts to groom others that they see online. 

DID YOU KNOW

that Verizon customers can now record video with their wireless phones and upload the videos directly to YouTube using an easy to remember number – YTUBE (98823)? Within minutes the new videos can be viewed by YouTube visitors.

DID YOU KNOW

that a company named Syntraxis is seeking to change the way we use social-networking sites by promoting more “purposeful communities.” These communities are designed, not just for making friends, but for sharing values and aspirations. They promote the concept as “Aspirational Networking” for users to collaborate in learning and knowledge-sharing. For more information visit www.syntraxis.com.

Government Actions—No Summer Recess

Summertime may be a slow time for schools and school administrators, but this summer Internet safety is a hot topic among legislators and government leaders.


On Capitol Hill July 24th, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation conducted a hearing on the status of Internet safety titled “Protecting Children on the Internet.” The committee heard first-hand about online dangers, and possible legislative solutions to prevent crimes and the victimization of children online. One suggestion was mandatory Internet safety education in school, like i-SAFE’s K-12 curriculum. The committee was told that the Virginia Department of Education has taken the lead, becoming the first state that requires Internet safety to be integrated into all instructional programs. The committee agreed that cyber predators are “a plague upon this country,” and Chairman Daniel Inouye (Alaska) promised that the solution may be a “multi-layered strategy—one that teaches our children about safe and responsible online behavior; one that encourages industry action to develop tools that will aid parents in their efforts to restrict inappropriate material from their children’s access; and one that relies on swift and certain action by law enforcement officials in finding and punishing those who would use the Internet to harm children.”

That same week in July, the nation’s governors met in Michigan, for a four-day National Governors Conference. During a break-out session on Internet safety, the governors and other state leaders heard that parents and schools need to emphasize Internet safety. Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell was quoted as saying “this (Internet safety) is going to be a hot topic.” And, New Hampshire Attorney



General Kelly Ayotte said, “This is an issue that we are not going to arrest our way out of.”

Rhode Island is the latest state moving toward state-wide mandatory Internet safety education in schools. The Rhode Island state legislature worked with i-SAFE to draft legislation that would require the Department of Education to create curriculum that would be used in schools throughout the state. The legislation requires the Department to report back to General Assembly leadership and the Governor before February of 2008.

However, Rhode Island is not all policy and procedure. James McBride, known as “Mr. Deep Positivity,” has created a series of positive rap songs—including one with a positive Internet safety message. James is a former “Rhode Island Big Brother of the Year” and currently takes his musical message to teen centers and youth clubs across the state. 

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. The goal is to educate students on how to avoid dangerous, inappropriate, or unlawful online behavior. i-SAFE accomplishes this through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. It is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org