Teaching Your Kids How to Stay Safe on Internet

With more and more kids using social networking, and internet predators lurking, FACT has garnered some tips from a variety of sources for parents who want to help keep their kids safe online.

Edwardsville, IL (prHWY.com) February 11, 2010 - The Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT) reports that the number youngsters involved in "social networking" on the Internet is growing dramatically.

"According to iStrategy Labs," says FACT's managing director, "the number of users on Facebook who are between the ages of 13 and 18 grew by 88 percent in 2009 to 10.7 million. Facebook and MySpace require all users to be at least 13 years old, but other sites are geared for children even younger."

FACT has garnered some tips from a variety of sources for parents who want to help keep their kids safe online:

Explain the Difference Between Sharing and Oversharing. Social networking is about sharing photos, thoughts and experiences, but ... explain to your kids that they should never share personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, bank account numbers, passwords or Social Security numbers. Also talk about what constitutes inappropriate photos or language, and stress the fact that -- while you may be able to delete them -- you can never fully take them back.

"Never talk to strangers" applies online too. One of the first rules we teach our kids is to never talk to strangers; remind them that the rule holds true when online. Even though chatting with a stranger online can seem harmless, the relationship can evolve and grow until the stranger has earned your child's trust -- and can then exploit it.

Set strict privacy settings. Social networking sites let users determine who they want to share information with. Talk to your child about restricting access to his or her profile to only friends or users in safe networks such as their school, clubs or church groups.

Keep the channels of communication open. Let your kids know that you are always ready to talk if they are ever threatened, bullied or feel uncomfortable about an experience they had online.

Join them online. Set up your own account in the same social networks. This will help you better understand what social networking is all about. You can also then "Friend" your child and keep an unobtrusive eye on what the or she is doing.

Rolens says federal law requires that sites which collect identifying information from children under 13 must get a parent's consent first. She adds that parents can report concerns about data collection from children under 13 to the Children's Advertising Review Unit of the Council of Better Business Bureaus at www.caru.org/complaint.

This news bulletin has been issued by The Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT), a consumer organization formed under the not-for-profit corporation laws of the District of Columbia in 1984.

FACT serves more than 1 million consumers nationwide. Additional information on FACT may be found in the

Encyclopedia of Associations, and by visiting the association's Web site (www.usafact.org).

Informative, unbiased news bulletins are regularly disseminated by FACT to help its members remain current on matters which might seriously impact their lives. The association does not offer support to -- and does not receive support from -- any political party or movement. In addition to publishing consumer-related reports, the association provides more than 30 benefits for its members, ranging from medical insurance and dental discounts to prescription drug savings and scholarships. FACT's administrative office is located at 318 Hillsboro Avenue, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

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