



TEEN SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, DC YIELDS GOOD ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Program is a Partnership of Cox Communications, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and Children's Advocate John Walsh

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 2, 2006 – Cox Communications, in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), today released findings from their Teen Summit on Internet Safety. The Summit was designed to hear straight from the source why teens engage in risky behavior online and how parents and guardians can best teach their kids to be safer. High school students and their parents and guardians from Cox Communications communities met in Washington, D.C. for the Summit, which was moderated by John Walsh and NCMEC's Staca Urie. The Summit followed up to the release of a National survey of teens about Internet usage conducted by Cox in partnership with NCMEC.

"We learned that teens don't tell mom or dad when they receive an inappropriate message or photo because they fear their parents will blame them for receiving the communication," said Walsh, children's advocate and host of America's Most Wanted (FOX). "I'm a real believer that parents should tell their kids that they can come to them for help in these situations without the fear of punishment. Parents need to continue to keep the lines of communication open."

The teen delegates also offered advice about when Internet safety education should be taught and who should teach it. "Children should be educated about Internet safety as soon as they have access to a computer, before they develop unsafe habits," recapped Staca Urie, manager of outreach for NCMEC. "These teens reinforced that Internet safety needs to be taught in schools, and the teens believe that the most powerful education tool would be for older teens to talk to their peers about Internet safety."

Key findings—Advice for parents and guardians

- **Become an experienced Internet user.** Parents and guardians should become more knowledgeable about the Internet to better understand chat lingo and other communication vehicles used by teens. One teen delegate said, "Before a parent can talk about MySpace they need to first know what it is."
- **Keep the lines of communication open by not overreacting.** Teens usually do not tell their parents or guardians when they accidentally encounter an inappropriate image or solicitation online. Teens fear that the parent or guardian will think they did something to cause the message to be sent, which may lead to the parent restricting access to the Internet. The National survey also shows that only one in five teens who receive an unsolicited message will tell an adult.
- **Talk about Internet safety, now.** Several teen delegates said they knew of a peer who had a face-to-face meeting with someone they had met online. The survey also found 30% are considering such an encounter while 14% have already met in person with someone they met online. The survey also shows that when parents and guardians talk

to their teens about Internet safety, their exposure to potential threats decline and they make safer online decisions.

- **Teach Internet safety to elementary-aged students.** Children should be taught Internet safety as soon as they begin to use a computer. Parents should not wait until middle and high school to talk about Internet safety because teens may have already developed bad Internet habits.
- **Ask an older responsible teen to be an Internet mentor.** Parents and guardians should pair their children with a trusted teen mentor to reinforce the parent's instructions about Internet safety.
- **Encourage schools to play a role in teaching Internet safety.** Teens need to hear about the importance of Internet safety from their parents, guardians, teen mentors and teachers.

Reasons teens engage in unsafe online behavior

- **Teens view the Internet as a way to meet new people.** Teens are willing to talk with people they've met first online because they view the purpose of the social networking and other Internet forms of communication as a way to meet new people. The teens stated that it has become an accepted practice to talk to people online that they don't know. In the National survey, 40% of teens reported they usually reply and chat with someone they don't know.
- **Teens have a false sense of security.** Some teens are knowledgeable about the dangers of sharing too much information such as photos, first and last name, city and state in blogs and personal profiles. But teens don't believe they are personally at risk of a predator making a face-to-face contact. One teen delegate summed it up by saying "They just don't think it can happen to them."
- **Teens view the Internet as a socially safe environment.** Teens feel free to act differently online compared to their actions in real life, and exhibit more outgoing and bold personality traits. One teen shared that one of his classmates is shy at school and has very few friends but talks to many people online and has numerous "virtual" friends.

The Teen Summit is the latest initiative of Cox Communication's Take Charge! Smart Choices for your Cox Digital Home, a program designed to help parents, guardians and kids make smart media decisions. Cox Communications and NCMEC began working together in 2004 to help educate families on how to be safer online. A major component of Take Charge! is NetSmartz[®], an interactive, educational safety resource from NCMEC and Boys & Girls Clubs of America that uses age-appropriate 3-D activities to teach children and teens how to stay safer on the Internet. Cox also offers free, comprehensive parental control software for all of its high-speed Internet users.

John Walsh, Take Charge! spokesperson, children's advocate and host of "America's Most Wanted" (FOX) moderated the Teen Summit, which will be aired later this summer on Cox Communications' local cable channels. Following the Summit, Walsh and the teens participated in a briefing about Internet safety. They then went to Capitol Hill, where the students met with elected officials from their respective states to discuss the positive and negative aspects of Internet use from a teen perspective.

After the Summit and Capitol Hill meetings, the teens blogged about their experience at Cox's web log, www.DigitalStraightTalk.com. The teen delegates will also help teach Internet safety to their classmates, parent groups and the larger community through speeches, letters to the editor and local media appearances.

About the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

NCMEC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCMEC's congressionally mandated CyberTipline, a reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation, has handled more than 387,800 leads. Since its establishment in 1984, NCMEC has assisted law enforcement with more than 119,800 missing child cases, resulting in the recovery of more than 102,200 children. For more information about NCMEC, call its toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST or visit its web site at www.missingkids.com.

About Cox Communications (www.cox.com)

Cox Communications, a Fortune 500 company, is a multi-service broadband communications and entertainment company with more than 5.9 million total residential and commercial customers. Cox offers an array of advanced digital video, high-speed Internet and telephony services over its own nationwide IP network. Cox Business Services is a full-service, facilities-based provider of communications solutions for commercial customers, providing high-speed Internet, voice and long-distance services, as well as data and video transport services for small to large-sized businesses. Cox Media offers national and local cable advertising in traditional spot and new media formats, along with promotional opportunities and production services. More information about the services of Cox Communications, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises, is available at www.cox.com, www.coxbusiness.com, and www.coxmedia.com.

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