

# INTERNET

# Boys & Girls Clubs Are Leading the Charge Against Internet Abuse

[ WRITTEN BY MICKEY GOODMAN ]

t's 2 p.m. and Executive Director Bobby Duan is savoring the quiet at the Brookhaven Boys & Girls Club on North Druid Hills. "It won't be this way for long," he said. Before the words even escaped his mouth, the buses arrived and children poured out as eagerly as Braves fans arriving at Turner Field for the playoffs.

The chatter was constant but manageable in the deceptively large building with room enough to rotate more than 200 kids per day, ages 6 to 18, from the Learning Center to the Game Room to arts and crafts, the gym and the computer lab in a three-hour span after school.

"We're not a glorified babysitting service," Dunn said vehemently. "We monitor the kid's grades and tutor those falling behind. We provide a healthy outlet for excess energy through sports in the gym, intramural and traveling basketball, handball and soccer teams; and teach arts and crafts, offer summer camps and encourage kids to help out in the community."



# SAFETY

Another important program at Boys & Girls Clubs is teaching kids to use the computer safely for fun and learning, a sorely needed and challenging task.

# Virtual Reality

It's not surprising that if you ask kids what they like doing best, most reply, "going to the computer lab." But teaching kids how to use the World Wide Web for good instead of mischief can be a challenge.

Dan Rauzi, the senior director of technology at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, was stunned by the results of a recent survey conducted by the Clubs. More than half report that their parents never followed standard safety practices, including never surfing the Internet with them, asking who they are talking with online, restricting access to dangerous sites or checking the ratings on the video games they play.

"[Internet safety] begins with parents," Rauzi said, "The most important thing parents can do is to talk with their kids about the rampant violence in video games and why the Internet can be dangerous." He advises parents to discuss what's happening on the screen, whether it's a commercial, video or movie and explain that it's not necessarily the truth. "Don't over- or under-react to what



CHACKING DREAMSTRANCON

"The unprecedented amount of personal information that kids are posting to social networking sites contributes to their vulnerability."

MICHELLE COLLINS
Director of the Exploited Children's Unit

they see and do. Instead, initiate a dialogue," he advised.

Rauzi and other experts like Michelle Collins, director of the Exploited Children's Unit at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, feel the single most important element to Internet safety is to get the computer out of the child's bedroom and into family space where use can be monitored more easily.

They also warn that social networking sites like www.myspace.com and www.facebook.com are fraught with danger. One in 7 kids report having been contacted by predators and 1 in 25 have been aggressively solicited to meet in person. "Both sites are trying to make it difficult for predators by removing the offender and notifying law enforcement," Collins said. "The unprecedented amount of personal information that kids are posting to social networking sites contributes to their vulnerability."

In Atlanta, John Whitaker, GBI special agent in charge of the High Tech Investigations Unit and Internet Crimes Against Children task force, said that one of the dangers of social sites is that there is no age verification. "Fourteen-year olds can claim they are 18 and interact with teens far more sophis-

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Parents Lead the Way

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said. "They will push the boundaries but deep down kids like rules and feel safe when someone in wacking them." For example, when it comes so MySpace or Facebook accounts, regardiess of how conful the teen may be, friends of friends can corract them and easily bypass the safery are mortful for the community and

the patents, raisons should make know their children's usernameswords and are listed among their to better monitor their children as predators are not larking about He also warms paratest not arbitrary about Internet usage. "!

arbitary about internet usage. "Pegpinal with your child how much time they shoult spend online or playing games beyone homework assignments (for example, as thour or two per day after homework and chorsel, Set up a framework you can both be happy with."

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safere, though nothing is fool proof. First parents should check with the other search parents feering Provider (ISP) for free parental caused to dook. At away, getter serious parental caused tooks, At away, getter serious procumentations for substance parents who complete a chockle receive recommendations for substance that fits their parameters. (To access, clot less "Kalo" Safery 'bon 'Tools for authorize the Kalo" Safery 'bon 'Tools for any Calculos." Each software program has to advantage and disadvantages. Persons see endire. The serveral filtering not web size to rest out on the other form for which was for contrast or other free feet when the form the contrast of the free feet for the contrast of the

"Kids are technology-sarvy," Rassi said. "They can figure out ways so gat around many readflooks possess seers so even the most stringers elisten don't always work. They quickly figure out that they can go so a friend't shouse, where the rules are more relaxed. That's where the values was hare inclifed come to site."

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