



# *Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc.*

## **NEWSLETTER**

Issue No. 8  
May, 2009

Projects and events are filling May. We're working with Girl Scouts, helping them develop a mentoring program for other Scouts; collaborating with several youth groups to expand Middle School and Teen Nights in town; bringing Mike Nerney back to address parents (please don't miss his presentation – it's truly powerful); providing responsible service training to local businesses where alcohol is served; and developing public service announcements with Yorktown teens, along with many other projects. We always welcome suggestions for other programs; either come to a coalition meeting and speak with us about it, or send an email. As always, if you have an event or other item you'd like to see in future newsletters, or have questions about any programs listed here, please let Cathy know at (914) 736-1450 or [cadlerask@yahoo.com](mailto:cadlerask@yahoo.com).

*Tricy Cushner, President    Cathryn Adler, Director*

### **Calendar**

**Wednesday, April 29th**

**4 pm: ASK coalition meeting**  
*Sparkle Lake Community Building*

**Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**

**7-9 pm, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Social in Honor of DARE participation**  
*Elks Lodge, Yorktown Heights*

**Tuesday, May 12**

**7-9pm, Michael Nerney**  
*Back by popular demand, Nerney answers parents' questions.*  
*Yorktown Jewish Center, Rte 202*

**Thursday, May 14**

**7:30-9pm, Milton Creagh,**  
*Westchester County Center, White Plains*

**Fridays, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>**

**7-10pm, Teen Night for 12-15 yrs**  
*Lakeside at Osceola*

**Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>**

**12-5pm, Yorktown Community Day ASK Presentation**  
*Mildred E. Strang Middle School*

**Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>**

**6pm-on, Relay for Life**  
*Jack DeVito Memorial Field*  
*ASK teams up with PBA and Leos to benefit American Cancer Soc.*

### ***Michael Nerney returns to Yorktown: "Substance Abuse and the Teen Brain – How This Impacts Yorktown"***

Internationally-respected speaker and expert on substance abuse and its impact on the developing adolescent brain, Mr. Nerney provides information and insight to parents that is invaluable.

After last year's presentation, parents asked that the Alliance bring him back again – and he's scheduled to speak to parents on Tuesday evening, March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Mark your calendars and don't miss this very special evening. The Yorktown Jewish Center will be hosting the event, which will be free and is open to the public.

For further information please contact the ASK office at (914) 736-1450 or email [cadlerask@yahoo.com](mailto:cadlerask@yahoo.com)

### ***Battle of the Bands***

The Recreation Department is hosting a Battle of the Bands on Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 PM. The event is sponsored by DARE, and will be held at the gazebo in Jack DeVito Memorial Field.

### ***Milton Creagh to speak in White Plains: "Parenting is Prevention"***

Mr. Creagh is spokesperson for the Elks' National Drug Awareness Program, and host of the PBS series "Parenting Works" and "Atlanta Teen Talk". This free event is presented by the Westchester Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Free Youth.

RSVP Patricia Warble, [pwarble@sascorp.org](mailto:pwarble@sascorp.org) (914) 332-1300

*The Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc., is a not-for profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to keeping our kids out of harm's way. For further information, please email the Alliance at [Alliance4SafeKids@yahoo.com](mailto:Alliance4SafeKids@yahoo.com), or write to PO Box 106, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598. Please visit our website, [www.AllianceForSafeKids.org](http://www.AllianceForSafeKids.org)*

## **Sunday at My Local Cybercafe**

By Cynthia Cervini

It's a Sunday afternoon, 3:35 pm, and I'm sitting at our local cybercafe with my laptop. My daughter is sitting across from me, presumably working on her biology. I had to wrestle **my** laptop from my sixth-grade son who was playing Club Penguin on line with Jim From Karate's sons who live across town. I didn't know my laptop had a built-in microphone. It's bad when your eleven-year-old knows more about your computer than you do. I brought my daughter, the tenth-grader, here to do some homework and put some distance between her and MySpace. I left my notes and my cell phone at home, but my daughter was able to instant message her brother to ask his father to bring my notes downtown. Ah, the internet.

A few months ago I was fortunate enough to attend **Internet Safety for Parents**, a two hour program offered by Officer Brian Mundy. Officer Mundy is the School Resource Officer assigned to Mildred E. Strang Middle School. Listen to him speak and you'll be impressed by his knowledge of the internet; couple that with the reality of working with nine hundred middle schoolers, and you soon realize he is a wealth of relevant and practical information. His goal that evening was to educate parents about some of the risks for teens on the internet, and offer advice on how we can create a safe environment for our children.

I was dismayed to find out how really behind the eight ball I am. For example, Mundy cautions that children should only be able to access the internet in a common room so that parents can walk by and keep an eye on what is going on. Admittedly, we fall short on this one; my daughter got the internet in her room two and a half years ago and I'm not even quite sure how that happened. Do I attempt to ambush her unexpectedly? Yes, I do, but because our dog follows me everywhere I go, the pitter patter of all six of our feet gives her more than enough lead time to minimize chat screens and use a biology website for cover. I try to appeal to his animal instincts – you know, stalking prey and stuff – to no avail. Let's face it, the dog is no ninja. While I was dwelling on my obvious shortcomings, Mundy interrupted my reverie with more advice. "Whose child has asked for GTA 4?" Uh oh. Just the fact that I know he is referring to Grand Theft Auto 4 signifies that this line of questioning is not headed in my favor. Officer Mundy explained that Grand Theft Auto is a video-game series where characters steal cars, beat up other characters and commit crimes. Other than writing a letter to Santa, my eleven-year-old son has made his wishes known to all interested parties about what he hopes will be under the tree this Christmas. It's part of his long-term plan to sell his Wii system and buy an X Box 360 to online game with God knows who, which was next on Mundy's list of 'internet don'ts'. Apparently, X Box isn't the only on line platform in town either; middle schoolers can use hand-held PSPs (play station portable) to game with their friends and virtual strangers who may pose as friends, but the reality might be far different. With no face-to-face communication, Mundy asked parents, "who are your children really talking to?" Falling short on three for three of Mundy's precautions I was elated when the discussion moved to webcams. I sat up a little straighter because I have expressly forbidden my daughter (and most recently my son, for the purpose of playing Club Penguin with his friends) to have a webcam. It was a little dicey for a bit when my Texas sister-in-law offered to buy my daughter a webcam for her birthday. I explained to Texas that my daughter didn't need to accessorize in that manner but all too quickly the cat was out of the bag when my daughter's cousin ratted me out (can you hear it? "We **really wanted** to get you a webcam for your birthday but *your* mother said no."). Just add it to the list of my daughter's grievances and consider it well worth the argument, because at least I came up with one point, thereby scoring 1/4 on Mundy's pop quiz. Twenty five percent. I haven't done so poorly since high school trigonometry (don't tell my mother). I was right, however, to come down on the webcam issue - especially since my daughter has a computer in her room. Mundy explained that webcam sessions, photos and videos can easily be captured and shared by others. Once anything is on the internet there is no way to get it back. Mundy relayed a disturbing story out of Illinois where a youngster inadvertently left their webcam on and was streaming on line for the whole

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night. Considering how many times my daughter falls asleep with her ipod playing, unless I can train the dog to turn off the webcam it's just not happening.

MySpace and Facebook- admittedly I attended the program to learn more about what my daughter is up to when she is 'studying biology' and why she was off the wall when a downed tree interrupted our cable/internet service for two days last spring (she still won't speak to the neighbor responsible for this outrage). Mundy explained that MySpace and Facebook are social networking websites where users can interact with friends using personalized pages featuring profiles, blogs (diary entries), photos and music. MySpace, only five years old, has over two

million users a day. Children under age 13 can't join but there is no way to verify a user's real age. Users 16 and under are automatically placed on 'private' status meaning only people invited by the child are allowed to view their MySpace page. I was able to breathe easy (my daughter's MySpace is on private status and will remain that way until she is thirty) but only for a minute. Mundy's next statistic was chilling: there are over 29,000 registered

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sex offenders using MySpace. . His advice to teens using MySpace and/or Facebook: even if your page is private DO NOT make personal information available. Without even joining MySpace I was able to look up my niece's name, age and where she lived. On Facebook I was able to ascertain where my daughter's best friend goes to high school; this information would be available to anybody who takes the time to look her up. Just recently this beautiful girl was the subject of a health-related news story on the CBS early show. It's frightening to think how easy it would be for someone to watch the news, then turn on the computer to track her down.

Mundy then told us about resources parents can turn to. MySpace has a parent care site that can assist parents in tracking their child's MySpace activity. Parents can report if their child's age is misrepresented and have their profile removed completely. The home page of MySpace offers numerous safety tips.

Even among friends the internet can lead to problems. Since users don't interact face to face, it's easier to 'say' things by text or 'im' (instant message) that they wouldn't say in person. Messages can be misconstrued; 'just kidding' can lead to, at the very least, hurt feelings and it doesn't always stop there. Threats or prolonged abuse called 'cyberbullying' can lead to school and/or police involvement. Mundy advises instructing children to print out any i.m. or texts that make them uncomfortable, even if they are involved in behavior their parent(s) would disapprove of. By no means should children ever give out their password. The last thing anyone needs is their "ex" anybody (friend, boyfriend, girlfriend) hacking into their computer. While it would seem like common sense not to divulge one's password, when I reminded my daughter of this her reaction of 'oh well, too late' suggested that with teens and the internet common sense might not be so common. We'd do well to remind our offspring of even the most obvious rules.

I've learned much of this information a little too late where my fifteen year old daughter is concerned. It's like shutting the barn door after the filly has taken the laptop down to the cybercafé to sip on a mocha latte. However, for the audience at Mildred E. Strang Middle School that evening, parents of pre-teens like me, the information was invaluable in helping to keep our children safe. If I had to do it all over again ... oh wait, I can! I have a sixth grader begging to be molded (he just doesn't know it).

Armed with more knowledge, I will be establishing some internet rules early; rules for my son (the obvious ones) but rules for myself too. I'm going to try to keep up with the technology. I'll help the dog set up a FaceBook account if he asks, to find out more about how it all works. I can see it now... it will be just like Officer Mundy advises: the dog has a gender-neutral name, he is above the minimum age (in dog years that is) to join, there will be no references to where he lives, no phone number (he doesn't have one), he doesn't play on a sports team that I know of....

Check out Winter Cervini's page on FaceBook. [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

### **Teen Nights at Lakeside at Osceola**

In cooperation with ASK, Lakeside at Osceola will be holding Teen Nights throughout the summer. Starting on May 15<sup>th</sup>, they will be held on Fridays through June 26<sup>th</sup> (except June 5<sup>th</sup>), and on Tuesdays from July 7<sup>th</sup> – August 28<sup>th</sup> (except August 4<sup>th</sup>). The events will run from 7-10PM, rain or shine, and are for teens 12-15 yrs old. There will be a cover charge of \$8 per person. Music and dancing, basketball, ping pong, game arcade, volleyball and a snack bar are all available. Teen Nights will be supervised by Lakeside staff. For more information, contact Lakeside at Osceola at 914-245-3246, email [LakesideOsceola@aol.com](mailto:LakesideOsceola@aol.com). Location: 399 East Main Street, Jefferson Valley.

### **TIPS TRAINING AVAILABLE**

If you're an owner or manager of a business where alcohol is sold and are interested in getting your staff certified as TIPS trained, please contact Art Lander at [crimecat48@yahoo.com](mailto:crimecat48@yahoo.com)

### **ASK Committees Forming**

Are you interested in working with a group to visit local businesses in support of their efforts to not sell alcohol to minors? Or think that helping a group of teens develop public service announcements for local broadcast might be interesting? Or meeting Yorktown residents at community events throughout the year? Or maybe helping to plan a Middle School or Teen Night?

If any of these appeal to you, we've got a group that you might like to work with.

Meetings of the Adopt A Store, Public Service Announcements, Community Events and Middle School/Teen Night committees are being planned.

Just contact Cathy at (914) 736-1450 or [cadlerask@yahoo.com](mailto:cadlerask@yahoo.com), and she'll get you in touch with the group you're interested in.

Better still, if you think there's a committee that should be formed to address a need in town, come to a meeting and let us know! We have quite a few volunteers who might be interested in developing your idea. If it helps keep the kids of our community safe, we're interested. Call, write, or come to a meeting. You'll be welcome.

### **2009-2010 Youth Court sign up**

Teens from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade interested in joining next year's Youth Court can contact Youth Court Director Art Lander at [crimecat48@yahoo.com](mailto:crimecat48@yahoo.com).

### **Guitar Hero or Rock Band Competition!**

Are you involved with a teen group who might be interested in organizing these events? There are locations in Yorktown interested in hosting them; just give ASK a call – we'd love to work with you!

### **Raffle: Trump National Golf Outing for 4**

The day includes breakfast, a round of golf, lunch, and private tour of the facilities with Yorktown's own Dan Scavino, Executive Vice President and General Manager.

*\$25 per ticket, \$50 for 3      Face value: \$2,500*

Funds raised will help underwrite ASK's programs and events for Yorktown kids and community awareness. For information call (914) 736-1450 or email [cadlerask@yahoo.com](mailto:cadlerask@yahoo.com). The winning ticket will be drawn on June 1<sup>st</sup>.