

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safety While Surfing – The Internet, That Is!

SUFFOLK, Virginia (September 30, 2009) - The Suffolk Police Department now has a new tool in their arsenal to combat gang violence and to help parents keep their children safe while surfing the internet. Known as ComputerCOP, this software is an important part of your family's internet safety plan. These CDs were purchased with grant funds from the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program, and currently 1500 copies are FREE to parents that request them.

Since the internet is so readily available to the majority of children, it is important for parents and guardians to supervise their computer activity. While the Suffolk Police Department understands that using computer monitoring software is a personal family decision, they encourage parents to speak to their children regarding their experiences on the internet and the consequences of the choices they make on a daily basis.

This software program has benefits outside of gang violence prevention in that it allows parents to monitor illicit computer usage to include sexual predators and on-line scams that prey on juveniles.

With special "trigger words" in the programs' database which track specific language associated with issues of gangs, substance abuse, possible depression and other problems related to adolescence, parents also have the ability to customize the database to track information which should never be released while "chatting", including their child's full name, home or school address or other personal identifying information. Parents can monitor their child's computer usage at their convenience by simply inserting the CD and running the program,

which also scans photos and text files saved on the computer, in addition to providing a keystroke recorder. Also included on the CD are safety tips for parents regarding internet usage.

The gang awareness aspect is important as it has been discovered across the country and in this region that gang members are communicating through computer usage. With this new software, concerned parents will now have the ability to monitor computer usage by their children and deter any inappropriate practices.

Suffolk Police Chief Thomas Bennett stated, "Children require protection and guidance at every age. We are reminded daily that the internet is full of predators that are ready and willing to prey on innocent and unsuspecting children. These criminals use the anonymity of the internet to solicit young victims. Not only did this grant provide us with the funding to provide these CDs, but to also provide training to our officers and to the youth in our community about the importance of safe internet practices."

These CDs (one per family) may be obtained from the Suffolk Police Department precincts located at 230 East Washington Street in downtown, and 1901 Bridge Road in northern Suffolk, weekdays from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

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