

Kids & Screens: Parents need to be aware, involved



MONICA FARAM/THE CLEBURNE TIMES REVIEW

Collin Gregory, Burleson (Texas) Police Department Communications Coordinator, leads a "Protecting Our Kids in A Digital World" session.

BY MONICA FARAM
CNHI NEWS

As smartphones, apps and social media platforms become central to how young people communicate, law enforcement officials across the country are urging parents to stay actively involved in their children's digital lives to help protect them.

Collin Gregory, communications coordinator for the

Burleson Police Department in North Texas, said many of the challenges facing youth today don't begin in school hallways or neighborhoods — they begin on screens.

"Parents have to understand that a phone is not just a phone anymore — it's a gateway to the entire world," Gregory said. "That includes incredible opportunities to learn and connect, but it also exposes kids to risks they may not fully understand or be prepared to handle."

Digital threats have become more complex and harder to detect. They include things like cyberbullying, online predators, scams and exposure to inappropriate content.

Just four major apps — Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat — total more than 9 billion active accounts.

Gregory said many law enforcement encounters involve parents who were unaware of what their

children were doing online or with whom they were communicating.

"This isn't about placing blame on parents — it's about recognizing how quickly technology has evolved," he said. "A lot of adults didn't grow up navigating these kinds of digital spaces, so there can be a gap in understanding. That's exactly why it's so important to stay engaged."

Experts and students both said involvement does not

mean constant monitoring or invading a child's privacy, but rather building open lines of communication and establishing trust. This approach helps parents feel confident and supportive, encouraging children to share their experiences without fear.

"There needs to be a balance," said Avery Case, a senior from Woodward, Oklahoma, who will attend Oklahoma State this fall. "Very strict parents tend to have sneaky kids."

"It starts with conversations," Gregory said. "Kids need to know they can talk to their parents about what they're seeing or experiencing online without immediately fearing punishment. When that trust is there, they're much more likely to speak up if something feels off."

Many popular platforms used by teens include features such as private messaging, disappearing content and location sharing — tools that can be misused if not properly understood. Gregory encourages parents to take time to learn how these apps function, which can help them feel more competent and in control of their children's online safety.

"One of the best things a parent can do is simply sit down and ask their child to walk them through the apps they use," he said. "Let them show you how it works. Not only do you learn, but it creates a natural opportunity to talk about safety."

PARENTAL LIMITS

Some students said they are grateful and understand more now that they have gotten a little older, the limits parents placed on them regarding phones and social media. Others acknowledged a little pushback as friends and peers had access to phones and social media earlier.

Claudia Withey, a high school senior from Indiana, said she got her first phone in elementary school. It was a simple device, just for texting and calling.

"Throughout the years, I was allowed to add some social media, but not all of it," she said. "I did have a time limit, but not anymore."

Case said her parents did not let her access social media until she finished her sophomore year of high school. She said when she first got a phone, all the apps she wanted had to be approved by her mother with an alert, which Case said her mom quickly grew tired of.

"I am grateful they made me hold off," she said. "They warned me at a very young age about the dangers of social media. I sat through some two-hour lectures about not posting anything you don't want your grandma or pastor to see. So I've been very cautious with social media."

Gregory also recommends parents set clear expectations around device use, including screen time limits, appropriate online behavior and

SEE SCREENS, PAGE A13

KERLEY

Continued from Page A4

Earth to its core — he was about to cause a revolution! Society had long embraced Aristotle's theory of Earth as the center of the universe because such a view seemed to make perfect sense. After all, as unique creatures of God, man must surely be at the center of that creation, right?

When Copernicus discovered that the geocentric model was incorrect and that the configuration of the planets was, in fact, heliocentric (sun-centered), the world exploded in protest. Most notably because it was not considered to be in line with the accepted primacy of man, and therefore the primacy of Earth in the universe that God had deliberately created. What followed was much debate and even more protest. The heliocentric position eventually won the day, with later observations confirming Copernicus's initial assumptions. The change in knowledge, however, was nothing short of a revolu-

tion, and came to be called just that — The Copernicus Revolution.

Years later, a similar case from biology provided yet another opportunity for science to showcase its tendency and necessity to constantly "evolve." Once again, Aristotle had led the way by describing the phenomenon by which small life forms spontaneously come into being from decaying meat, or so it was believed. The phenomenon Aristotle described was adeptly termed spontaneous generation. However, and here is the fascinating thing about it all: spontaneous generation was taken to be an indisputable scientific fact for two millennia. Though occasionally challenged through the 17th and 18th centuries, the theory was not discredited until the work of the French chemist Louis Pasteur and the Irish physicist John Tyndall in the mid-19th century. In other words, it took over 2,000 years (that's 100 generations!) for scientists to observe and convince themselves that house fly

larvae do not spontaneously generate from rotting meat! This all sounds a bit humorous to us now, but only because today "we" are so much more scientifically advanced (C.S. Lewis called such arrogance "chronological snobbery," by the way), and yet Copernican-type revolutions within science continue today with great frequency. In other words, science, scientific truth that is, continues to "evolve" and recreate itself in its own transient image. Nothing is permanently fixed. Everything is free-floating.

Now, I am not saying that science is not in the very good business of discovery, which always involves change; I am saying that with so many scientific "facts" having been overturned, criticism directed at unchanging religious truths from the scientific community could be considered hypocrisy, to say the least. After all, the footing of science is not nearly as solid as we might

think, all the while we worship science as a god. Listen to these recent and random headlines from the scientific community and to the not-so-subtle nature of an ever-shifting scientific truth: "How Studying Babies' Minds is Prompting Us to Rethink Consciousness," or "A Whole New World of Tiny Beings Challenges Foundational Ideas of Life," or "Biological Aging May Not Be Driven by What We Thought." What about "Jurassic Fossil from China Rewrites History of Bird Evolution," or maybe "Say Goodbye to Einstein's Theory — This Newly Discovered Physics Rethinks Everything We Know" (emphasis mine). A quick count gives the key verbs challenges, rewrites, may not be, and rethinks. Such is the ever-changing nature of scientific truth. No worry, we simply term uncovering the lie as "discovery" and all the problems concerning truth go away. What a contrast to be made between science

and Christianity. While scientific discovery is most valuable, the truth of the matter is it can never be rock solid like Jesus — "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

If science holds its theories this tenuously, especially as it relates to the origin of life and the theory of evolution, shouldn't we be equally cautious about what science says against God? All things considered, we should bear in mind that origin of life theories promoted by science are always far from certain and always transient. In fact, some theories about the origin of

life are so fascinating that they are indeed "Out of This World." Join us again next time as we examine the difference between what science reveals and what scientists say. Until then, Is God Dead?

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

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KING

Continued from A4

swine drown in the water. When the townspeople encounter him, he is clothed and in his right mind.

By taking a step of faith,

that lucid moment has turned into a lifetime of freedom. The former demonic is now an evangelist for Jesus, telling everyone the great things the Lord has done for him. May God truly open the eyes of our hearts.

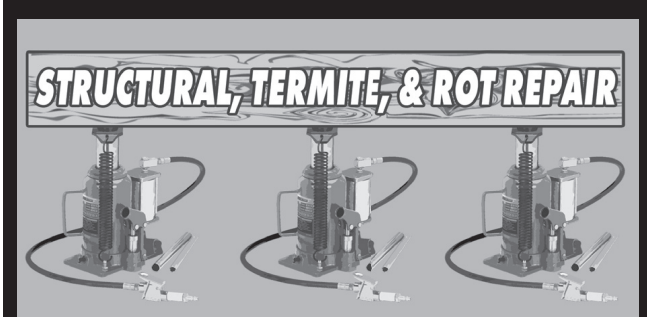
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Charles C. Boston, 182 Lake Forrest Dr., Somerset, KY 42503 hereby declares intention(s) to apply for a Quota Retail Drink, Malt Beverage Retail Drink, Special Sunday Sale license(s) no later than June 1, 2026. The business to be licensed will be located at 202 Alexander Dr., Somerset, Kentucky 42501 doing business as Cruiser's Saloon.

Owner, Charles C. Boston of 182 Lake Forrest Drive, Somerset, KY 42503.

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