

KIDS & SCREENS

Parents, kids seek balance in digital age

BY CARSON GERBER
CNHI NEWS

Jordan Spicklemire landed her first job as a high-school counselor in Indianapolis in 2012 — the same year half of Americans reported owning a smartphone. In the years that followed, she held a front-row seat as the devices gradually made their way into the hands of students.

“When I started, I noticed kids walking down the hallways talking to each other at their lockers,” Spicklemire said. “That turned into the students all staring at a rectangle with an earbud or headphones on.”

Since then, the age at which kids start using devices has only gotten younger, and the amount of time they spend looking at screens has rapidly ballooned.

Nearly 60% of kids have their own tablet by the age of 4 and are spending over two hours a day on average viewing a screen, according to a 2025 report by Common Sense Media, a digital-education organization.

The amount of screentime skyrockets to nearly nine hours a day on average for 13-to-17-year-olds. Five of those hours are on a smartphone, according to a 2024 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Reality-shifting tech

For today’s American teens, smartphones became popular when they were toddlers and are now woven into every part of their existence, making Generation Alpha the nation’s first digital natives.

Nearly all U.S. teens (95%) have smartphones, with new data showing the average child gets their own smartphone by age 8 1/2, according to the American Psychological Association.

That’s led to a reality-altering shift in how kids understand the world, argued Kate Blocker with Children and Screens, a research and education nonprofit. Digital environments are shaping how children learn, socialize, view themselves and interact with those around them, she argued.

“Every experience matters for how our brain is wired, and this certainly extends to digital environments — especially when you consider the amount of time that youth are spending online nowadays,” Blocker said.

But as mounting research points to the technology’s harmful impacts, parents and lawmakers are asking urgent questions and moving quickly to implement policies aimed at curbing the health toll on kids.

Up to 35 states are restricting or banning smartphones during school hours, and at least 19 states have enacted laws regulating minors’ use or access to social media.

More parents are joining grassroots movements such as Wait Until 8th, a Texas-based initiative that advocates for

kids not owning a smartphone until at least high school. More than 147,000 families have so far signed the pledge.

Today, Spicklemire, now an academic-success coach, runs a local chapter of the initiative in Morton, Illinois. Based on her own experiences, holding off on giving her two kids personal devices was an easy decision.

She and her husband only allow their two young children to watch a limited number of shows on a TV screen, and they’ve opted not to let their 6-year-old get a school-issued tablet in kindergarten like the other children.

“I don’t trust my kids’ childhood to be in the hands of big tech, because they don’t care about childhood,” Spicklemire said. “They just want to make money.”

Good, bad, unknown

Her decision is a reasonable one, argued Ran Barzilay, a psychiatrist with the Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Research Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

Barzilay and a research team released a study in December that found 12-year-olds who owned a smartphone were 30% more likely to be depressed and 40% more likely to be obese compared to 12-year-olds who didn’t have a device.

The analysis also followed kids who received their first smartphone at 12. After a year, at the age of 13, more than half had a 50% chance of having a serious mental health symptom compared to kids without a smartphone.

“The message is for parents to think of the decision to give their kid their first smartphone as a decision with immediate

and clear health implications,” Barzilay said.

A 2024 study published in JAMA Pediatrics also found children using tablets at age 3 1/2 were associated with more expressions of anger and frustration a year later. Children prone to anger or frustration at age 4 1/2 then led to more tablet use over the next year.

The data suggest early-childhood tablet use may contribute to a cycle that harms kids’ emotional regulation, according to the study.

But assuming smartphones or tablets are inherently bad glosses over the positive experiences they offer kids, argued Blocker with Children and Screens.

Those benefits include social connection, especially for teens, she noted. Isolated or vulnerable populations can use devices for identity exploration and community building. Kids have access to educational tools and apps. Parents feel safer knowing they can easily reach their child.

“It’s really nuanced,” she said. “We do see from the existing evidence a clear mix of benefits and risks.”

“For me, I use it for communication between my groups,” Kadeesh Bridgeman, a high school student from Anderson, Indiana, said. “Talking to my groups, my adult allies, student council, just to be able to talk back and forth and get a clear message.”

“A lot of the time, the technology can be overused and it’s not great to be staring at a rectangle all day,” Mehak Sankhla, a junior at North Andover High School in Massachusetts, said. “But I also feel like there are so many benefits and when it’s used right, you can do so much with it.”



Optometrist



Teresa P. Morton, O.D.
East Bernstadt Eye Center
2647 North US Hwy 25
East Bernstadt, KY 40729
(606) 843-6060
Began practice in 1995

Pediatric & Special Needs Dentistry



Dr. Kim Brown | 606-864-6680 | londonkidsdental.com

Podiatrist



Paul K. Krestik, DPM
Bluegrass Regional Foot & Ankle Associates
1690 W. Hwy 192 London, KY 40744
(606) 862-9900
Began Practice in 2002
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PUBLIC NOTICES

5.13.2026

The Bush Fire Protection District will be holding re-election for current Trustee Phillip Barnard

The Bush Fire Protection District will be holding a re-election for current Trustee Phillip Barnard. This election will be held at Bush Fire Station No. 1 on June 1st, 2026. Voting will

begin at 6 PM and will be open until 8 PM. Any tax paying landowner is welcome to come vote for their choice for Trustee for the Fire Board, on this date.

London Utility Commission would like to notify its customers that copies of the 2025 Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report are available

The London Utility Commission would like to notify its customers that copies of the 2025 Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report are available at our office, located at 801 North Main St. between the hours of 8am – 4pm, Monday – Friday. The report is also available online at

<https://londonutilitycommission.com/2025ccr>. If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent Zach Creech at (606) 864-2103 or via email at info@londonutilitycommission.com.

City of London Tourism is accepting bids from qualified companies for the purchase of bleachers for use at the London-Laurel Regional Fairgrounds/Wilderness Road Event Center

City of London Tourism is accepting bids from qualified companies for the purchase of bleachers for use at the London-Laurel Regional Fairgrounds/Wilderness Road Event Center. For information and a specifications sheet,

please reach out to Christina Sowders via email: Christina@VisitLondonKy.com. Bids will be accepted until Wednesday, May 20, 12:00p.m. City of London Tourism reserves the right to reject any bids received.

Energy and Environment Cabinet, Kentucky Division of Forestry, offers for sale an estimated volume of 529,808 BF of timber

The Energy and Environment Cabinet, Kentucky Division of Forestry, offers for sale an estimated volume of 529,808 BF of timber on 55 acres of the Kentucky Ridge State Forest located on Hwy 190 in Pineville, KY. This sale will be by sealed bid on a lump sum basis. The

bids will be opened at 10:00 AM Eastern Time on Tuesday, June 2, 2024.

For bid packets or additional information, contact: Adam Barnard, Manager KYRSF, 25 Phipps Elliott Mountain Rd Pineville, KY, 40977, Phone (502) 682-7225.

The City of London Planning and Zoning Commission will be hold a special called public hearing to consider Ordinance 2026-08 amending Ordinance 2022-03

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: The City of London Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a SPECIAL CALLED PUBLIC HEARING on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at the London Community Center building in the City Council Chambers located on the ground floor, rear entrance. The purpose of this PUBLIC HEARING

is to consider Ordinance 2026-08 amending Ordinance 2022-03 relating to the placement of qualified manufactured homes within the city limits of London, KY. The time of the hearing is at 5:30 P.M. All interested persons are urged to attend this hearing.

Public hearing will be held by the Laurel County Fiscal Court regarding proposed use of County Road Aid and Local Government Economic Assistance Funds

A public hearing will be held by the Laurel County Fiscal Court at the Laurel County Courthouse on May 26, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. for the purpose of obtaining citizens’ comments regarding the possible uses of County Road Aid and Local Government Assistance Funds.

comments on possible uses of the CRA and LGEA funds. Any person(s) who cannot submit written comments on possible uses of CRA and LGEA funds should call the Laurel County Judge Executive Office at 606 864-4640 by May 22, 2026, so the arrangements can be made to secure their comments.

All interested persons in Laurel County are invited to the hearing to submit verbal or written

The City of London, hereby requests proposals from qualified planning, engineering, urban design, and consulting firms to prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the City of London and the applicable planning area

The City of London, in coordination with the London Planning Commission, hereby requests proposals from qualified planning, engineering, urban design, and consulting firms to prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the City of London and the applicable planning area.

The selected consultant shall provide professional services necessary to prepare a legally compliant, data-driven, publicly supported, and implementation-oriented Comprehensive Plan that addresses current and future growth, land use, transportation, housing, economic development, infrastructure environmental resources, and community facilities.

The Comprehensive Plan shall serve as a guide for public and private actions and decisions to assure the development of public and private property in the most appropriate relationships. The plan shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 100, including, but not limited to, KRS 100.183, 100.187, 100.190, 100.191, 100.193, and 100.197.

Bids will be accepted until May 27, 2026. Bids must be submitted to: City of London Attn: City Building Inspector Bid 501 South Main Street London, KY 40741. The City of London reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received.

Sealed proposals for the furnishing of all labor, equipment and materials, etc. necessary for Laurel County Judicial Center Courtroom lighting renovation

Sealed proposals for the following work will be received by the:

LAUREL COUNTY, KY. FISCAL COURT
LONDON, KENTUCKY

in the manner and on the date herein specified for the furnishing of all labor, equipment and materials, etc., necessary for the following project:

LAUREL COUNTY JUDICIAL CENTER
COURTROOM LIGHTING RENOVATION
LONDON, KY

as set forth in the specifications and drawings prepared by Shrout Tate Wilson Consulting Engineers, PLLC.
BID SUBMITTAL

Contractor must submit their bids prior to 2.00 p.m., Monday the 18TH of May, 2026, at Shrout Tate Wilson Consulting Engineers, 628 Winchester Road, Lexington, KY 40505 or email to: Whitley Casey (whitley.casey@stweg.com), Christine Banks (christine.banks@stweg.com), Debra Ritchie (debra.ritchie@stweg.com).

Each proposal shall be submitted on forms provided in the Specifications, Form of Proposal. Proposals shall be enclosed in a sealed envelope with the following information on the outside, viz:

“BID DOCUMENTS”
LAUREL COUNTY JUDICIAL CENTER
COURTROOM LIGHTING RENOVATION
LONDON, KY
2:00 P.M. LOCAL TIME

One copy of the completed Form of Proposal will be required from each bidder. Forms of Proposal shall be completely filled out and submitted prior to the time of bids. Corrections to information on the Bid

Form must be initiated to be valid. Forms of Proposal not completely or correctly filled out will not be considered.

No proposal shall be withdrawn for a period of sixty (60) days after the date of bid opening. PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS REVIEWED Contract Documents may be downloaded from Lynn Imaging, lynnimaging.com.