

## CYBER PREPAREDNESS: TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Over the past few years we have heard so much about the cyber risks in our daily lives; everything from identity theft, fraud and phishing, cyber bullying and ethics, not to mention cyber predators. You would think that the only ones who haven't quite grasped the seriousness of it all would be our society's young children and teens; apparently not so.

Case in point: On August 2, 35-year-old Robyn Gardner, an American woman from Maryland, vanished while in Aruba. Robyn decided to take a five-day holiday in Aruba with a 50-year-old man she met on the internet. Having only a virtual friendship, never having met the guy, you have to wonder...what was she thinking. As of this writing, the man has not been convicted of a crime, but is being held for questioning.

Stories like this one and the "Craigslist Killer" are just a two of the many highly publicized internet-related crimes that make you wonder how in the world, with all the media's attention on such events, could someone still let their guard down to the point of still trusting what's out there? I don't know about you, but I just don't get it.

Unfortunately, as a society, the more we are consumed with the news of such events, the more we become desensitized to it all. We may say, "Oh, well, she/he should have been smarter than that", or "They should have known better". Am I right? So what can you and I do about it? Start small. Start with your loved ones.

I like to use these events as a teaching tool for my own children. Yes they are grown adults, but, don't assume that because your children are "adults" and may be out of the house, that you can't still have those "teachable moments" with them. You may have to change your presentation a bit, but don't stop those moments with your family. Even though they may say..."yeah, yeah, yeah...I know mom".....doesn't mean they still can't learn a thing or two. And if your children are younger, keep talking to them about it! You don't have to preach to them, just ask them..."*Hey, did you hear about the .....*?" Begin

the conversation. Just start off with the facts then ask them what *they* think about it. Usually what happens next is a great conversation between you and your children where you learn what they are actually think and what they would have or would not have done if it were them. If it's true that "You're never too old to learn", then why stop teaching?

The Department of Homeland Security has a campaign called **Stop | Think | Connect**. It is a national public awareness effort to guide the nation to a higher level of Internet safety and security by educating and empowering the American public to be more vigilant about practicing safe online habits. The campaign encourages Americans to view Internet safety and security as a shared responsibility – at home, in the workplace, and in our communities. For more information on **Stop | Think | Connect**, visit [www.dhs.gov/stophinkconnect](http://www.dhs.gov/stophinkconnect).

We may not be able to change the world, and the daily news may cause us to wonder "can it get any worse?" You may feel a sense of hopelessness for your children and their future, .but again; let's not think on those things. Instead, think about educating your family. Start out with one small piece (your children) and include others such as your nieces, nephews, your children's friends, your neighbors, co-workers. We can do something for the future. You can make a difference... passing along your knowledge. The possibilities are endless....not hopeless.

### **Want more?**

You will find many resources and materials at the following link:

<http://www.dhs.gov/files/events/stop-think-connect-campaign-materials.shtm#1>

Resource:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[www.dhs.gov/stophinkconnect](http://www.dhs.gov/stophinkconnect)