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May 19, 2006

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s) of Carterville Community Unit #5 School District Student:

The Internet has provided some wonderful opportunities for our children. Never before have they had access to such a powerful tool for conducting school research, learning about new things, finding new recreation and entertainment, and communicating with their friends both around the corner and around the globe.

However, children are uniquely at risk online, and for them, surfing the Internet can sometimes be like walking down a dark street all alone.

As a parent, you've probably thought at some point that your children know more about the Internet than you do. And to a degree, you're right. Growing up with the technology, children sometimes adapt to the Internet much more rapidly than adults. But having experience with the computer and the Internet is not the same thing as having experience in life. Children are all the more threatened online because they often lack understanding of the motives and intentions of others, and do not realize the danger in which they may place themselves and their families by giving away personal information about themselves.

Children have a rich private life away from adults, and in some ways that can be a good thing. But the key to protecting your child online is to stay involved in their use of the Internet, and to be aware of their online activities. Children need to be granted some responsibility in order to develop, and the Internet is no exception. But just as you wouldn't send your children into a strange city all by themselves, you shouldn't leave them online without parental guidance. Encourage your children to tell you about any online experience that scares or upsets them.

### Tips for Parents

- Keep the computer in a room other than the child's bedroom, so you can monitor what your child is doing and for how long.
- Set up an agreement and guidelines with your child about the use of the computer, including appropriate schedules and durations.
- Understand the services that your child uses online. If you do not understand them, have your child teach you about them.
- Investigate blocking and screening services offered by your ISP or by other web sites or software providers.
- Spend time online with your child so that you can set a good example for online behavior.
- Never respond to threatening or offensive messages, and encourage your child to do the same.
- Encourage your child never to give out any personal information.
- When discussing your child's day, be sure and ask about time spent online.
- Remind your children never to meet anyone they have met online without your permission and without your presence.
- Make sure to learn about everyone your child meets online, and discuss these relationships with

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your child.

### **Tips for Children**

- Do not give out personal information such as address, telephone number, parents' work address or work telephone number, or the name and location of your school without your parents' permission.
- If you ever encounter something online that you don't understand or that makes you uncomfortable, tell a parent or teacher right away.
- Never get together with someone you met online without getting your parents' permission first. If a meeting is decided, be sure that it is in a public place and that you bring one or both parents along.
- Do not send any picture of yourself to anyone without getting your parents' permission first.
- Do not respond to any messages that make you feel uncomfortable. It is not your fault if you get a message like that, and it is okay to tell your parents no matter what it is.
- Follow the rules that your parents set for computer and Internet use. Always make sure it is okay to go online before you do so.
- Remember that people may not always be who they say they are.

We would also encourage parents to become educated on Internet matters. John A. Logan College offers many opportunities for summer and evening instruction at very affordable rates. Carterville Unit #5 Technology Committee anticipates offering parents some opportunities next fall to share tips and the latest Internet issues with parents in an effort to keep parents informed and students safe. In addition to this information, please visit our website at [www.cartervillelions.com](http://www.cartervillelions.com) and click on the link entitled "Internet Safety Tips" to view many other links that discuss Internet safety and keeping your children safe as they explore the World Wide Web.

Have a great summer.

Respectfully,

Carterville Unit #5 Administration & Unit #5 Technology Committee