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Top Stories

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Protect Your Kids: Dangers Of MySpace.Com



Mark Johnson
Reporting

(CBS 11 News) Explicit photographs, obscene language, stories of drinking, drugs and partying — it's not a pornographic Website.

It's MySpace.Com.

Chances are, your teen has been there.

One high school student said, "I think it's like, fun to like look at their pictures and keep up with everyone at school."

MySpace.com is the most popular social networking Web site on the Internet these days.

It gets two and a half times more visitors, or "hits," a day than the search engine Google.

It's the place, according to teens, to see and be seen, connect with friends or hook up with new ones.

"Friends from other schools, you don't see them often and you can keep in touch with them through that. We met some boys on it," another teen said.

Many of the postings are fun and innocent. Others are not.

Dianna Gardner is a high school teacher who says if parents took the time to navigate MySpace.com, they would be in for a shock.

"Don't be surprised if you find your kids on it. They are on it ... they are," she warned.

Chris Watts visited her daughter's site and has now signed up for one of her own to help monitor her child.

"You peel away the layers of MySpace.com and you get to a very ugly place in a very short time," the mom observed.

Reports show crimes have been associated with the Web site.

California police say gang members are using the site. In Baltimore, a man is charged with murdering a woman he met online.

Police say he read up on his victim on her MySpace.com site and at least two men have been arrested in Texas for soliciting minors through the site.

Law enforcement offices across the country are monitoring MySpace.com and its users.

"It's a dangerous Web site, very dangerous, especially with the capability you have of meeting kids on it," said Det. Morton Grant, a League City officer who monitors the site.

FBI Special Agent Patrick Kiernan agreed.

"You are bringing the outside world into you house and strangers can come in through that internet just like they can come through your front door."

Officials remind parents even if their teens are doing the right thing, it doesn't mean their friends are behaving.

Parents who want to check MySpace.com, should look under their teen's name, school, names of friends and even under home computer cookies.

A MySpace.com spokesperson says a third of its employees are dedicated to scanning the site to remove objectionable material and the sites of kids under the minimum age of 14.

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