

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Angela Roeber  
Director, Communications  
Project Harmony  
402-595-1326 ext. 254  
Cell Phone: 402-380-1350

## Summer Safety Includes Technology Safety

Summer safety for children goes well beyond sunscreen, swimming, biking, and softball/baseball. With the explosion in communication tools, technology should be included within your summer safety checklist.

Project Harmony would like to remind parents of the risks involved and provide parents with a few safety tips to keep children safe as they engage in social media, explore the internet and text friends this summer.

- **Get Tech Savvy.** Even if you are not a Facebook fan, become familiar with the tools and social media platforms your kids are using. Follow their activity and know who their connections are. Unfortunately, there are child predators lurking online.
- **Set Limits.** When it comes to kids and technology, children require clear boundaries and an understanding of the appropriate use of technology. Parents need to be not only vigilant about their kids' online behaviors, but also consistent when it comes to enforcing the rules.
- **Watch Smart.** Use tools to filter movies and programming based on ratings, violence and sexual content.
- **Surf Smart.** Use tools that restrict access to sites with inappropriate content and monitor whether settings have been changed.
- **Be Wireless Smart.** Take the phone away at bedtime or install "sleep" functions on the phone so that calls received after a certain hour go directly to voicemail.
- **Don't over share.** The temptation to post pictures from vacations and pool parties will be high and it is a prime time for older teens to review their digital footprint as they begin to think about college applications.

"Safety is a conversation and a shared responsibility among all of us," says Project Harmony Executive Director Gene Klein. "Kids today are growing up with the internet, cell phones and text messaging. Most cannot distinguish between online and off. It is important that we talk with our children and help them understand how to make responsible and safe choices about

what they post and/or share. Unfortunately, rumors, threats and photos can be disseminated on the Internet very quickly. It is also equally important to make sure our kids know where to go for support if someone ever harasses them.”

Social networking can be a fun way to socialize and maintain relationships over the summer break. Always remember to be careful; technology can follow us everywhere.

### **ABOUT PROJECT HARMONY**

Project Harmony is a nonprofit, community-based organization that has served more than 25,000 children during the past 20 years by providing a child friendly environment in which specially-trained professionals work together to assess, investigate, and resolve child abuse cases. In one centralized location, Project Harmony co-houses with Omaha Police Department Child Victim/Sexual Assault Unit, Nebraska Health & Human Services/Child Protection Service Initial Assessment and Child Abuse Hotline, Lutheran Family Services and Child Saving Institute. Project Harmony exists to protect and support children, collaborate with professionals and engage the community to end child abuse and neglect.

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