

Parents and Guardians,

The Sheriff's Office and school districts have had an increasing number of "online" issues. All these issues stem from social networking sites, such as, Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Many students use their accounts appropriately and with good intent. Although, we have seen an increase in the amount of online "bullying" and it is being carried into the school environment. The main goal is going to school, is to learn and better oneself. But these sites are allowing the typical "drama" to get completely out of hand. Many bullies, feel empowered by posting on the internet and making threats against other students, and spread rumors.

What I would like all parents to know is that online bullying is wrong and illegal. Harassment via computer or any electronic device is a misdemeanor in the State of New York. Online bullying and rumor spreading also opened many people up to civil lawsuits.

Parents have to be vigilant when it comes to your children and the internet. Not only can your children be arrested for making harassing messages, but it can also have ramifications in school. Besides your child getting into trouble, they could very well be victimized too. The school is required to provide a safe and secure learning environment, but when students are harassing and spreading rumors online, it becomes a school issue.

Parents need to monitor, limit or delete your children's social networking accounts. This may sound harsh and you may think that this is a vital part of their social interactions, but we all functioned fine prior to social networking. If your child comes home and is emotionally effected by someone bullying them it's going to alter the vital learning process, and it makes it worse when it's at home on their computer.

If you allow your children to use these sites, please monitor what they post. Many sexual predators and criminals stalk innocent people on these websites. Criminals use these sites to see many things you might not realize. If someone makes a public post about going on vacation, this invites the criminals to find out where you live and possibly burglarize your home. Also limit pictures and posts of your home, what school colors your children are wearing, and at times, the photos of your children. Sexual predators will copy photos of innocent victims for their own benefit. This should prompt you to make sure all photos are appropriate. Avoid posting pictures in bathing suits, near your house or vehicle, and sometimes in school sports uniforms.

The Sheriff's Office will address future issues as they arise. We encourage parents to supervise your children online and report improper conduct to the specific site being used. If rumors, bullying or inappropriate thing are happening online, that might be the queue to delete your child's account for a length of time. There is a low tolerance for harassment, and we can work together to stop it now. If parents have any questions, please feel free to contact your school principal or the Sheriff's Office regarding issues.

Thank you,

Deputy Robert Stapleton

Broome County Sheriff's Office / Non-Emergency Dispatch 607-778-1911