Qwest Communications is proud to partner with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to make the Web a safer place for children.

For more information visit www.IncredibleInternet.com/onlinesafety

Qwest Spirit of Service® | NATIONAL CENTER FOR **MISSING & EXPLOITED** C H I L D R E N®

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Social Networking 101

Eighty-one percent of parents believe that teens aren't careful when volunteering personal information online, and 79 percent of teens agree, according to a recent study conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Among the most popular places on the Internet for teens to share personal information are social networking sites—a phenomenon that has swept the nation, with some sites boasting more than 80 million members.

Qwest Communications and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) want you to be better educated about the wonders – and the potential risks – of social networking sites.

The following is a social networking snapshot. For more detailed information, visit www.incredibleinternet.com, where you can take the Parents Safety-Net Test to instantly assess your awareness of online safety issues facing your family. You can also get online safety certified by completing the easy-to-follow online safety activities about social networking, protecting children online, keeping home computers safe and protecting your identity online.

What are social networking sites?

The concept of social networking sites, such as MySpace, Friendster and Xanga, is incredible. It allows people from all over the world to share information and connect with one another through the creation of a virtual community. While most members are individuals some politicians, moviemakers, bands and businesses are promoting themselves on social networking sites, capitalizing on their vast popularity.

What are the risks?

While it can be a fun way to keep in touch with friends, the potential for risk depends on the amount of personal information members—especially young members—may divulge about themselves through videos, photos or written communication.

According to www.NetSmartz.org, the unprecedented amount of personal information available on social networking sites makes them perfect places for people who would harm children to identify their victims and gain their trust. This trust can be used to lure children and teens into a false sense of security, making them vulnerable to "grooming" and enticement to meet in person, which could have very serious consequences. Other dangers to children include exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying or identity theft. Read real-life stories about dangers children and teens have encountered online by visiting http://www.netsmartz.org/resources/reallife.htm.

What can you do?

The social networking phenomenon is not a fad that will likely disappear. Most experts agree: The solution to online safety is education, supervision and communication with your children. You can stay informed about the everchanging Internet at www.incredibleinternet.com.

In addition, following are social networking site safety tips for parents and guardians from www.NetSmartz.org:

1. Discuss the dangers and future repercussions with your child.

2. Enter into a safe-computing contract with your child about his or her use of these sites and computer use in general.

3. Enable computer Internet filtering features if they are available from your Internet service.

4. Know each of your child's passwords, screen names and all account information.

5. Put the computer in a family area of the household and do not permit private usage.

6. Discuss with your child that you are going to monitor what your child and your child's friends are posting regarding your child's identity. Often children and their friends have accounts linked to one another, so it's not just your child's profile and information you need to worry about.

7. Know and talk with your child about what other access he or she has to computers and devices like cell phones and Personal Data Assistants, or PDAs.

8. Report criminal behavior to the appropriate law-enforcement agency, including the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline at www.cybertipline.com, or the Internet Fraud Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.

NOTE: Qwest is providing this resource developed with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children as a public service. Qwest assumes no liability for the accuracy or use of this information.