

SCREEN from page 1A

a day gaming. Her daughter, a tween, begged her for a smartphone with a data plan so she could use social media with her friends.

"Everyone has one," she said. Ruston thought that couldn't be the case, but "Screenagers," the culmination of research, interviews and her own family's experiences, shows how technology has saturated every facet of many people's lives.

"The desire to have these things is deep," Marohl said.

He talked about his 8-year-old son, who plays some games and also uses apps like Scratch and Code Academy to learn how to code.

"He goes to school and he rides the bus and he comes home and says, 'Dad, I should get to play 'Fortnite' (a video game) and I should get to play this or that.' The pressures to play those video games and be on those websites and have these devices are really powerful," Marohl said.

The parents in attendance spoke about the "everybody does it" mentality, especially when they as parents know of other families who also want to restrict screen time.

"There is strength in numbers," one dad said about several families using similar methods to allow technology in restricted times.

One boy identified himself as an eighth-grader and said his parents only let him use a Kindle. His mom said she sometimes takes away the password so he doesn't always have access.

"Even a Kindle has got that internet accessibility, access to social media and interactive games that are out there," Marohl said. "If moderated, you've got a good parent that's paying attention to what you're doing."

Marohl and "Screenagers" both advocate for some technology use — but moderated and restricted. A contract, agreed upon by both the child and the parent, might be the best way to curb harmful behaviors. This could be for setting set hours, not using the phone during meals or even keeping device screens open to the rest of the room.

In a follow-up interview with The New York Post, Ruston

said, "The worst thing a parent can do is hand over a smartphone and hope for the best. But parents often feel like trying to set limits is pointless, that the cat is out of the bag, tech is everywhere. I hear all kinds of excuses. But kids' brains aren't wired to self-regulate. They can't do it without you, and they shouldn't have to. So you have set guidelines."

The film shows the idea of a contract several times, starting with the 2013 viral news story of Janell Burley Hofmann, a mother who decided to give her 13-year-old son a contract along with his first iPhone. When Ruston replicated the idea, however, her daughter was not happy. It wasn't until the family sat down together that the contract actually worked for everyone.

"It's best to create a contract with your kids' input," Ruston said.

Lane County Public Health Community Health Analyst Abbie Lee, coordinator for Healthy Directions Coalition, said the coalition focuses on preventing underage drinking, but it also looks at environmental factors affecting youth and families.

"We're concerned with the health side of this new age of technology and how it's affecting other risky behaviors," she said.

She presented "Teen-Proofing Your Home," a Prevention Lane program with tips for parents and families for "keeping teens and tweens safe."

Not only are kids these days faced with the dangers of depression, alcohol, drugs — especially with the recent legalization of marijuana — and unsecured firearms, technology is changing the face of addiction.

In a PBS Newshour special on "Screenagers," Ruston and the anchors discussed a May 2016 report issued by Common Sense Media, which found that "half of all young people feel they are addicted to their devices. Almost 60 percent of adults think their kids are addicted too. And a third of parents and teens say that they argue daily about screen time."

Multiple studies have shown how games, with their bright colors, sounds and in-game re-

can really leave some lasting scars."

Cyberbullying has grown as a

that, "You really do have a big impact on what your family and teen engage in. Be that role model and the person they can come to if they have an issue."

For Bob Teter, executive director of Siuslaw Outreach Services (SOS) and vice chairman of the Healthy Directions Coalition, he sees many examples of the way technology can

affect a home.

"I have seen over the years a kind of parallel with what the kids are being exposed to and the increase in domestic violence, because kids aren't learning consequences," he said. "If you have a disagreement, you don't work it out; you shut them off, or you retaliate. That's carried over into adults. ... So they're having problems. 'I can't deal with you, I can't work things out, so I'm going to retaliate.'"

But screen time is also related to depression and feeling unhappy with life.

According to Jean M. Twenge, in The Atlantic's September 2017 edition, "The more time teens spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression. Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent, while those who play sports, go to religious services, or even do homework more than the average teen cut their risk significantly."

As a professor of psychology at San Diego State University and the author of "Generation Me" and "iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy — and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood — and What That Means for the Rest of Us," Twenge spoke with her students and conducted several surveys for her research.

"All screen activities are linked to less happiness, and all nonscreen activities are linked to more happiness," she wrote. "Eighth-graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56 percent more likely to say they're unhappy than those who devote less time to social media."

For students at the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County, one young girl reported, they have to complete all homework before they can go to the technology.

Once there, her dad said she likes to play "Just Dance," a dancing game where participants mimic the dancer on the screen. It is often played in groups, providing both a physical and prosocial component.

Marohl said it was a positive that it was both interactive and social for her peers, saying it was possibly for screen time to provide those benefits.

However, Teter warned that while people use social media ostensibly to connect to other people, a 15-year-long Harvard study found the opposite to be true.

"What they saw over 15 years as the access to social media and the internet world increases, so did suicide, attempted suicide and kids feeling less connected. It was just paralleled with that. ... It's actually more disconnecting than anything else," he said.

"As the middle school principal, I do see this as an issue that we need to address, not just with schools but with families in the community as well," Marohl said. "I think getting the conversations going and keeping them going in our homes is good."

The schools, too, are doing their part. This school year, new art teacher Lauren Suveges was hired in part due to her expertise in digital citizenship, the skill of navigating the internet safely and perceptively.

According to Marohl, she will be covering such topics as who a person is, who they are online, how they act and behave, as well as the consequence.

"Every sixth-grader should get that this year, and I'm hoping to continue that and even expand it as we can," he said.

Siuslaw is also incorporating new policies to deal with handheld technology use.

"There are two conditions that need to be met to use a cell phone in a classroom," Marohl said. "One of them is that it is express teacher permission and the second thing is that it is for an educational purpose. If it doesn't meet those two prongs, it shouldn't be used."

The middle school has also removed students' access to Wi-Fi from their personal devices.

However, "They can access (the internet) from any school device, any of the Chromebooks, laptops or computer workstations," Marohl added. "I feel obligated to provide their education, not their entertainment."

He also reiterated the idea of a family contract decided on together.

"Know that you are the No. 1 influence," Lee said in her presentation. "Something that is often misunderstood is that parents do have a lot of influence over their teens' behavior. We know from studies that teens are less likely to engage in the behavior if they know that their guardians, parents or trusted adults in their lives disapprove of that behavior."

Marohl referred people to www.screenagersmovie.com and its many resources: for discussion, parent-child contract ideas and Ruston's blog, "Tech Talk Tuesdays."

"Again, I just want to emphasize that it is about trust," Lee said. "You're the parent. It's not about being their best friend. Set the rules and communicate. I think communication, which we try to emphasize in our coalition, is the best thing you can do to prevent risky behaviors. Although you can't really 'teen-proof' your teen, you can do things in the environment and in your home that keeps them safe."

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— Abbie Lee, Lane County Community Health Analyst, & Healthy Directions Coalition coordinator

wards, can target the feel-good centers of the brain.

"Those flashing lights and the sounds are hitting those reward centers in the brain," Marohl said. "That rush of dopamine is intense for people."

"Screenagers" shows how dopamine is especially potent in teens and tweens — "There is no other time in life when you're as susceptible to that pleasure-producing chemical than in adolescence," Ruston said.

According to Lee, "Teens are learning and growing, and like the documentary said, especially the part that controls the impulses and decision-making is still developing in teens up through adolescence and through adulthood as well. The brain is still developing through the age of 25."

And just what are teens doing with all that screen time? Social media on platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook allow people to post videos and comments. Phone games like "Candy Crush" often have unlimited settings, so people can play for extended periods of time, sometimes not noticing the passage of time. Video games can be played single- or multi-player. While some are story-based, problem-solving or have positive prosocial messages, many widely popular games feature violence or dangerous activities.

In those, it has become common to say, hear or be the target of derogatory comments.

This can lead to cyberbullying, a form of bullying or harassment using electronic means, across multiple platforms.

"The effects of cyberbullying are really impactful," Marohl said. "They are impactful at home, impactful socially, impactful emotionally and they

trend since the internet allows people to hide behind usernames, profile avatars, photo filters and voice modulators. While these tools used in the right way can be fun, they take away the accountability.

"These are not things that a kid would stand face to face and say to another child. There is no way that they would have the guts to stand there and say that, but you hide behind your screen and you put this out there," Marohl said. "Even some of our best kids get caught up in this, and then they get embarrassed about what they've done and don't want to come forward, ever."

Cyberbullying can also be the spreading of rumors, information or private photos. "Screenagers" showed the example of a tween who thought she sent her boyfriend a private photo just for him — and the next day it was all over school.

"When kids send things out or share them, a lot of them don't realize how quickly that can spread. You can't just back-track something. It's not like passing a note in class that can be ripped up, shredded and thrown away. It's images and language that are out there forever," Marohl said.

Lee agreed.

"When you put something out there, and even if you yourself have privacy settings on your social media accounts, your friends and family who are able to see that can now take a picture or a snapshot of that — and that can spread elsewhere," she said. "It's just a good tip to remind your young people and your family that everything you put out there — comments, photos, posts of things — it's going to be out there forever."

A common phrase is that the "internet is forever." People running for office or in the limelight lately have been reminded of past faux pas, be it in long-buried Tweets, a comment or joke that could be construed as sexist or racist or even more of those private photos that were never meant to be shared.

"It's a really complex world that we need to teach our kids," Marohl said.

One attendee echoed this, saying that parents modeling correct screen-time behavior should help all members of a family. She talked about her kids' sports games and practices, and how many of the adults are constantly checking their devices while their kids play.

"Maybe as a community, we could model that better. It's hard, though," she said.

Lee reminded the parents

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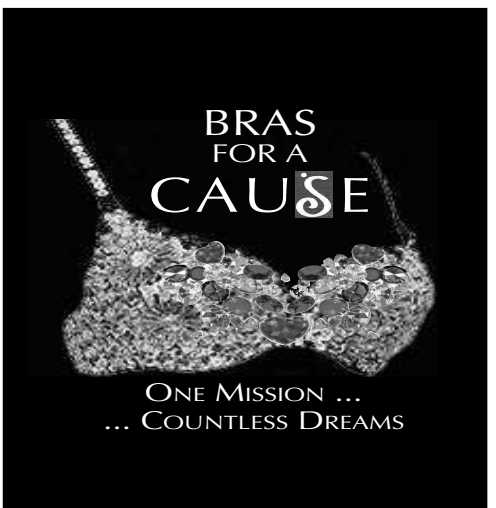
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