

TEENS

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“This level of engagement online increases the risks of cyberbullying,” he said.

New psychological impacts have resulted from of all this smartphone use — about half of all U.S. teenagers report feeling addicted to their smartphones and 59 percent of parents agree with that.

Numerous networks

Wenning provided a thumbnail sketch of the numerous social media platforms used by teenagers. About 71 percent of teenagers report using more than one social network, with Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat being the top three, he said.

Just when parents think they’re catching up with the new technology, their children are 10 steps ahead, he said. When parents ask teenagers to see their social media accounts, their children often show only the “clean” accounts and leave others hidden, he said.

About 93 percent of parents report they have a good idea of what their children are

doing, but about 41 percent of teenagers say their parents don’t, Wenning said.

Wenning noted that photos on Snapchat disappear after a short time period, but apps exist that allow teenagers to save a screenshot of the Snapchat image. The images are never really gone, he said, and he advised parents to remove Snapchat and Instagram from their children’s smartphones.

Tumblr is easy to find, but privacy is difficult to protect, he said. Kik Messenger lets teenagers text message for free, but allows communication with strangers. Whisper is a social confessional app that “can get really dark,” Wenning said. People who use Whisper might encourage a person with suicidal feelings to kill himself, while others might take advantage of vulnerable girls.

Yik Yak works like Twitter but is limited to short distances, which could help a user with bad intentions get physically close to a teenage user, Wenning said. Omegle is a chatroom app intended to connect strangers, which could lead to all kinds of problems, he said.

These apps appeal to teenagers for a variety of reasons, Wenning said, including com-

petition for “likes,” a cure for boredom and the need to be noticed. The reduced inhibition that social networks provide helps teenagers come out of their shells and say things without realizing their actions are not short-lived, that their online behavior is traceable and long-lasting.

Sexting

About 20 percent of teenagers reported sending nude photos, and about 39 percent reported sending sexually suggestive text messages. Sexting typically starts out as casual talk and then escalates, Wenning said.

“They’re basically fishing,” he said.

The goal of sexting is to line up a sexual encounter, and often sexting involves illegal activities. According to Oregon law, sexually explicit conduct can include actual and simulated behavior — acting out a sexual act could be illegal, Wenning said.

Exchanging nude photos of a girlfriend when she is a minor is illegal. Providing nude photos for a “consideration” could be a felony — even if the “consideration” is not money but a promise to do an older brother’s chores around the house,

Wenning said.

“There is no such thing as innocent sexting,” he said. “Nearly all cases of sexting are felonies.”

The consequences can be severe. Some online sex crimes carry a 70-month mandatory minimum, and if multiple offenses occur, the mandatory minimum could be 25 years in prison. And teenagers from 15-17 years could be convicted as an adult, Wenning said.

Offenders convicted of a sex crime must register in all 50 states as a sex offender, he said. This can restrict where they can reside and affect job prospects for the rest of their lives.

Bullying

If a teenager avoids criminal prosecution, he or she may be subject to cyberbullying. Wenning cited the cases of Amanda Todd and Jessica Logan, teenagers who were bullied for years after their nude photos were initially posted online. Both girls eventually took their own lives. Revenge porn is another example, where boyfriends might post nude photos of ex-girlfriends after a bad breakup.

About 87 percent of teenagers reported being bullied

on Facebook, and about 81 percent reported that it was easy to bully a person online, Wenning said. He noted that 58 percent of cyberbullying was done by girls and 41 percent by boys. He said boys often turn to physical bullying instead.

Bullying increases the risk of suicidal ideation, Wenning said. He noted that about three-quarters of teenagers who committed suicide had communicated their intent in some way in advance. There are warning signs, he said.

Teenagers often don’t ask parents for help from bullying because they want to feel in control, don’t want to appear weak or a tattletale, or fear the humiliation that could result.

Parents need to become attuned to their children’s affect and any tendency to withdraw from normal activity. He advised parents to start a conversation with their children about sexting and bullying.

Useful tools

Wenning suggested some aids for parents grappling with this new technology. A useful tool is the online Urban Dictionary, which will help them understand the words and phrases their children use when discussing

social networking.

Parents own the smartphones their children use, and they pay the monthly bills, Wenning pointed out. Cell providers offer ways for parents to control cell service, but the providers can’t stop smartphones from accessing the internet through Wi-Fi. Circle with Disney is one program that can provide ways to handle that, Wenning said.

He also suggested parents visit NetSmartz.org, an interactive educational safety resource from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and CommonSenseMedia.org, an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children thrive in a world of media and technology.

He also recommended parents and teenagers learn about the Safe Oregon anonymous tip line created by the Oregon Legislature in 2016. Tips are triaged and interpreted by Oregon State Police within minutes, depending on security, timeliness and need for assistance. The website was initially set up to alert police about potential school shootings, but 40 percent of the tips in 2017 involved bullying, Wenning said.



Sen. Ron Wyden speaks during a town hall meeting in the Prairie City School gym May 1. Behind him are student body president Megan Camarena and social studies teacher Nate Barber.

WYDEN

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Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah worked together to pass — a 10-year extension to the Children’s Health Insurance Program, the Chronic Care Act for Medicare and the Family First Act, which seeks to prevent troubled families from breaking apart through counseling and treatment.

“Extremism feeds on poverty and despair,” he said, adding that he hoped his forestry bills could help improve the economy and end extremism.

Wyden said he didn’t believe extremist voices were anywhere near the majority, and good people across the political spectrum need to stand up and speak out and say, “Extremism is not welcome here.”

Wyden cited three steps he uses when dealing with people he disagrees with: be

respectful, propose something and act in a bipartisan way.

When asked by a student about arming teachers to prevent school shootings, Wyden suggested other steps that he believes don’t harm Second Amendment rights. Guns should be kept out of the hands of people with mental health problems, people on terrorist watch lists and people with domestic abuse histories, he said.

“We need a background check for every gun sold in America,” he said, including gun shows and straw purchases.

Wyden also wanted to “beef up” the nation’s mental health system, and he commended the Trump administration’s effort to regulate the sale of “bump stocks,” which can make a semi-automatic rifle fire like a fully automatic.

On abortion, Wyden said he supports the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling. It’s a private choice, he said. Otherwise, the U.S. government would

be making choices for women. He said he would like to see family planning and other measures eliminate the need for abortions altogether.

On climate change, Wyden presented two questions: Is there really a problem, and if so can anything be done? He answered yes to both, citing wind and solar projects across Oregon and the proposed biomass plant in John Day as constructive steps to address the problem.

Wyden said his “biggest frustration” in Washington has been getting infrastructure bills through Congress. After working for several years on a tax bill, he said he believed repatriated money from taxes on foreign earnings would be made available for infrastructure projects. Instead, the money went to corporate tax reductions, he said.

“I still hope to get that money back,” he said.

First elected to office in a 1996 special election, Wyden is a ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee and a leading Senate Democrat on the Joint Com-

mittee on Taxation. He also sits on the Energy and Natural Resources and Budget committees, as well as the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Wyden joined Republican Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho to write the Secure Rural Schools act, which Congress passed in 2000. Since then, the act has provided more than \$3.1 billion to Oregon counties for schools, law enforcement and roads. SRS payments were reauthorized for two more years under the 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill signed by President Donald Trump March 23.

Wyden also played a role in establishing a 10-year forest stewardship contract in the Grant County area, which helped keep John Day’s lone lumber mill running, and he has long supported legislation to stop the practice of using fire prevention funds to fight wildfires. The omnibus bill contains provisions that address this practice known as “fire borrowing.”

GUNS

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make unconstitutional in Grant County any law or regulation that restricts a person from possessing fire-

arms, ammunition, and firearms accessories,” the summary states. “Approval of this measure would require the Grant County Sheriff to review federal, state, and local laws affecting firearms, firearms accessories, and/or



The Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day.

Chinese sister city proposal gets the nod

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Establishing a sister city in China could present numerous benefits to Grant County, the John Day City Council learned April 24.

Taci Philbrook from Grant County Chamber of Commerce presented a proposal to establish a sister city relationship between John Day and Sijuzhen, a city in the Guangdong Province in China, or possibly Canton, the provincial capital.

Ha-Pen, a village in Sijuzhen, is where Doc Hay and Lung On, owners of the historic Kam Wah Chung business in John Day, lived before coming to the United States in the late 19th century. At its peak, about 1,000 Chinese lived in John Day’s “Tiger Town,” Philbrook said.

Sister city relationships not only foster tourism and cultural and educational exchanges but also establish contacts that lead to trade and investment, Philbrook said.

“Generally, Chinese cities take their sister city relationships seriously,” she said.

Philbrook said Don Merritt, the museum curator at the Kam Wah Chung Heritage Site, partnered with the chamber in naming Ha-Pen and supports the idea of promoting the heritage site.

There would be no cost to the city of John Day, Philbrook said. The chamber would cover the cost of the annual membership. The council approved the sister city proposal by consensus.

In other city council news, City Manager Nick Green read highlights from his five-page budget message for the next fiscal year. The city’s net position has increased by more than \$2.8 million, he said. External funding, such as grants, accounted for \$2.6 million. The city had to contribute matching funds of \$67,500 for the grants, but for every dollar of taxpayer’s money spent on the matches, the city raised \$40 in external funding, he said.

“We made more money in external investment last year than from all local revenue sources combined,” Green said.

In addition to external funds, the city saved about \$350,000 by consolidating a number of loans through Washington Federal, which saved interest and origination fees. The city also expects save \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year by transitioning the 911 dispatch center to another jurisdictional authority.

A public hearing for the proposed budget will be held at the council’s May 22 meeting.

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Come on out & help if you can. Community Corrections also works on keeping the mile from the Golf Course to Mills Lumber cleaned up.

Thank you. Richie.

**Richie Colbeth**  
Owner/Operator

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