

City hosts online awareness workshop

Computer Crime Unit sponsors educational session on predators

BY COLETTE LINTON
Staff Reporter

Online predators can pose an invisible threat for teens and children through the use of blogs and online social networks.

The Heartland Task Force C2000 Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition and Kirksville Regional Computer Crime Unit are sponsoring two Cyber-Safety/Online Predator Awareness workshops to educate parents and other adults in the community about how to prevent children from becoming victims of online predators.

The workshops will take place at 7 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. March 20 at Kirksville Middle School.

"We will be discussing the dangers of social networking sites that teens are involved in as well as predators and how and who they target," said Tim King, deputy chief of the Kirksville Police Department.

More than 40 percent of all teenagers with Internet access have reported being bullied online during the past year, according to the National Crime Prevention Council.

"We will discuss things parents can do to keep track of the things their kids are doing online and how it affects everyone and the consequences of being involved in it," King said. "Cyber bullying can happen to anyone with very little effort and is very common on most of the Web sites as well as [with] cell phones."

King and Jeremy Cordray, both members of the KRCCU, will deliver the presentations.

The KRCCU previously has spoken to middle school students in Adair County about cyber safety.

"This is a follow-up presentation," said Carol Cox, co-president of Heartland Task Force. "This is for any adult — parents obviously — who works with any of the youth-serving organizations in town."



Amy Gleaves/Inch

Hy-Vee accepts food stamps from local residents. The national Food Stamp Program changed its name to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program to encourage people to make nutritional food choices, even when they're low on income.

Missouri food stamp use increases

BY ANDY MOORE
Staff Reporter

As of January 2009, almost one million Missourians were using food stamps, which is more than one-sixth of the state's population.

Food stamp use in Missouri has been increasing steadily since 1999, but the growing number of food stamp applicants accelerated in 2008, according to a January 2009 report from the Missouri Department of Social Services.

Both Wal-Mart and Hy-Vee accept food stamps. Brad Neely, a manager at Hy-Vee, said he sees a lot of people who use food stamps, including many Truman students.

"There [are] a lot of students I know that do it on their own — paying for school and where they live and all the food," Neely said. "On a student income, most of them can't work full time and go to school."

Last October, the national Food Stamp Program changed its name to the Supplemental Nutritional Assis-

stance Program to promote nutrition.

"We view the food stamp program as a nutritional program and not a welfare program," said Dana Hughes, county manager for the Family Support Division, part of the Adair office of the Missouri Department of Social Services.

Hughes said food is the first thing people cut back on when money gets tight.

"People are in pretty dire straits just figuring out how to make it," she said. "If people are really struggling, they really need to apply [for SNAP]."

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced last week that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will grant \$5 million to help make the SNAP program more accessible, according to a USDA press release.

With the economic downturn, more people are being laid off and leaving unpaid expenses such as utilities, rent, childcare and insurance. Meanwhile, grocery prices are rising.

Adair is one of the poorest coun-

ties in Missouri, according to Major William Hogg, the corps officer and pastor of the Kirksville Salvation Army.

He said the need for aid relates to the recent economic downturn. Almost all of his clients receive food stamps, and he estimated that he sees about 600 families per month, a number that keeps increasing.

"With the economy the way it is, more and more people are coming into our office, and a lot of the things that they're coming in for is food," Hogg said.

He said the greatest need in Kirksville is food, and although people are reluctant to seek help, they still need to feed their families.

"Coming in for assistance of this nature is tough for a lot of people the first time," he said. "If you've never had to ask for help in this way ... it's a pride thing."

Hogg said the increased need for food resulted in part from extensive flooding last summer that devastated farming communities in Missouri, Illinois and Iowa, where a lot of food

is produced.

Arleasha Mays, acting communication director of the Missouri Department of Social Services, said she could not speculate on the specific causes for the rise in food stamp use in Missouri, but emphasized the need to get eligible people enrolled in the SNAP program.

"We really don't want Missourians who are in need to go without [food]," Mays said. "If you are eligible for a program, we really want you to sign up for that program."

The Missouri Department of Social Services Web site offers a number of resources for those interested in applying, including instructions on applying and pre-screening tests for individuals to see if they are eligible. Mays said the SNAP program is more available to the public now than in previous years.

"A part of the rise in food stamp use is because of our agency's efforts to assure that people who are in need out there learn about the program, and we assist them in applying for the program," Mays said.

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