

# UpFront



the monthly publication from the City of St. Peters

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**Isn't it time that you Know More about how to protect yourself & your family online? Page 2**



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# 'Know More' about Internet Safety

Would you write your financial information, including your bank account numbers and social security numbers, on a piece of paper and put it on a table next to an unlocked door, leaving it there for months or years?

If a stranger came up to you in public and asked for your financial information, would you provide it?

Would you open your door to strange adults and then fail to prepare your children about how to deal with unwanted advances?

Common sense dictates that you wouldn't do any of those things. But, consider that without proper online security guards in place, you could allow this type of risky behavior to take place through your home computer.

The good news is that potential threats posed on the Internet can be managed and reduced if you "Know More" about the Internet and the resources available to you. The City of St. Peter's new Know More program aims to help everyone—from the youngest Internet users to senior citizens trying to send an email to their grandchildren—enjoy using the Internet while avoiding common dangers.

Says **Mayor Len Pagano**: "This is going to be the kind of program that will let us all know what we can do right now as parents, grandparents, neighbors and friends. The recent tragic news stories about cyber-bullying brought this topic to the forefront. But there are other problems like identity theft, predators and spam. The best tool for all of us is information to help us 'Know More.' We'll never have all the answers—let's face it. Truthfully, some of the computer experts have told me when they figure out how to fight something, the bad guys are one step ahead. But we can 'Know More' than we do now, and we can learn what to look out for."

## SECURING YOUR COMPUTER

**Dr. Tom Holt**, who teaches classes about cyber crime, technology and criminal justice, criminal justice theories, and juvenile justice at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, says that it's important to have a firewall, anti-virus software, and spyware and adware protection on your computer. These security programs, Holt says, are "there to make sure that your computer is protected from malicious programs that can try to infect your machine and turn it against you, to steal information or drain information from your system. And, having those programs are critical. If you don't, then anything can happen to your system. It's just sitting wide open, like a house with all the windows open and the doors unlocked."

Holt says to be aware that sites illegally

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sharing copyrighted material, such as music and movies, can also cause you harm. Any file you download onto your computer has the potential of introducing malicious software.

You should regularly check all your financial accounts for any suspicious activity—doing so can reduce the damage if you fall prey to identity theft. This is a good idea whether or not you have the Internet, Holt says, since it's just as common for a criminal to steal mail from your home mailbox as gaining information about you online.

Criminals are introducing new malicious software and scams all the time. Internet users should use all the tools necessary to protect themselves, and that includes some common real-world sense. Be wary of anyone asking for your personal or financial information, no matter who they say they are and how legitimate their message might seem. An email supposedly from a bank, store or financial institution asking for information such as passwords, account numbers, your social security number, etc., is likely a scam. Don't click on any links. Also avoid questionable greetings such as an "eCard" from a complete stranger.

"More than anything else, you have to be aware of who it is that is asking for the information. It's the same thing as it is in public," Holt says.

## KIDS & THE INTERNET

For parents, it's crucial to monitor your child's use of the Internet. Just as you would with the telephone, you should limit your child's time spent online. You also should limit the types of sites your child can view. Holt recommends parents accompany a child while online up until age 10. The computer should be in an area of the home visible to everyone. As your child reaches the teen years, Holt says each parent should consider your child's maturity level as to your level of oversight. You can consider a written contract or agreement with your child that spells out how much time your child can spend online, and how he or she uses the computer—sending photos to a stranger, for example, is not



## TIPS ON CYBER-BULLYING

**Lynne Lang**, a Curriculum Specialist for BJC HealthCare School Outreach and Youth Development, defines "cyber-bullying" as the use of the Internet to cause pain to others. This can be done through blogs, websites, chat rooms or instant messenger. Lang says this is an emerging problem that is becoming very dangerous to the wellbeing of children.



### What Can Parents Do?

- Monitor your child's computer use. Keep computers with Internet in public areas of your home. It is NOT recommended that children have Internet access in their bedrooms.
- Talk to your child about your expectations, and teach them to use the computer responsibly.
- Create a written agreement that you and your child sign, and prepare to have consequences for violations.
- Find out what the laws are regarding threatening others on the Internet. Educate your child about your findings.
- Frequently check the websites your child is visiting. Ask experts how you can do this.
- Restrict the sites your child can visit on the Internet. Get advice on how you can block out or filter unwanted access in order to protect your child.

Learn more online at [stpetersmo.net](http://stpetersmo.net) and make plans to attend the "Know More" public forum at City Hall on Jan. 30 at 7 p.m.

## Catch the 'Green' Spirit – Shop St. Peters

Did you know that when you Shop St. Peters you're going green in several ways?

Now, more than ever before, we're conscious of our environment and making sure generations to come will have clean air and clean water. When you Shop St. Peters you not only help the environment by not burning as much fuel to travel outside of the area to shop, but you're also saving your hard-earned cash.

"With the high price of gasoline these days, it costs a lot each time you fill your tank," said Mayor Len Pagano. "The next time you see something you want in a sale advertisement at a store outside of St. Peters, ask yourself how much you will really be saving by the time you invest your time and spend the money on gas to get to that store (and back home) to make the purchase. Chances are, you may save money by simply forgetting the sale and making the purchase right here in St. Peters. You'll be helping your wallet, a local business and your City."

When you shop outside St. Peters, your tax dollars go to paying for their roads, their snow removal and other services that you won't be receiving. When you Shop St. Peters, the City sales tax that is added to your purchase is used to create parks, maintain streets and other amenities where YOU live, in YOUR city.

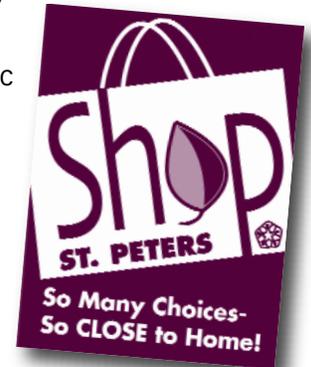
Mayor Pagano praised the retail choices in St. Peters, "We've got hundreds and hundreds of terrific stores in our City and more than likely, what you're looking for can be found right here in St. Peters. Please stay close to home, all you need to do is look."

**Please help us welcome the latest new businesses in St. Peters:**

SEASONS BEST PRODUCE & MORE INC  
3746 Harvester Road  
ARBY'S  
6086 Mid Rivers Mall Drive  
DETAILS CATERING & BISTRO LLC  
235 Jungermann Road  
BURGER KING  
6010 Mid Rivers Mall Drive  
KIMBERLY TIDWELL CPA P.C.  
1286 Jungermann Road  
GREAT SOUTHERN TRAVEL  
6201 Mid Rivers Mall Drive

AIR CARE ROAD CARE MOBILE SERVICES  
1525 Jungermann Road  
SNYDER ASSISTED INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES, LLC  
107 Harvester Road  
PRECISION AUTO REPAIR  
125 Centre Pointe Drive  
OLD TOWN AUTO & TRUCK REPAIR LLC  
338 Depot Drive  
KINDER CONTRACTING LLC  
564 Salt River Road  
WILLIAM HELDIGE PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC  
600 Jungermann Road  
[Home-based Businesses](#)  
HOUSE OF FASHION  
IT'S TIME TO ORGANIZE  
ROOM BY ROOM, LLC  
THE SHREDDER CONNECTION, LLC

**Go Green and Shop St. Peters where you've got So Many Choices, So Close to Home.**



## 'Know More' Program

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acceptable.

**Software programs are available that can limit your child's time online and block offensive content.** Another option for parents to limit time on the Internet is to keep the child's password and log onto the Internet for your child, says **Lynne Lang**, a Curriculum Specialist for BJC HealthCare School Outreach and Youth Development. Lang says we should remember that the Internet is a fantastic tool, and she cautions parents against becoming too restrictive. She says, "In their efforts to keep children safe, some parents become so strict that they forget their children can go next door and use someone else's computer. That's why it is important to talk to children about concerns, and come up with a plan for use and safety together."

Holt suggests that if your child has an account with a social networking site such as MySpace or Facebook, you as a parent should have access to that site, whether by setting up your own account or asking your child to see the web page. "If it's something they are sharing with the rest of the world," Holt says, "it's something they should be willing to share with you."

Lang specializes in violence prevention and studies the connection between bullying and violence. Five years ago, she began talking to students about cyber-bullying. Bullying is defined as

repeated words or actions intending harm, humiliation and/or intimidation. Lang says she found that cyber-bullying rarely happens exclusively from bullying at school. The Internet provides a way for the bullying to continue outside school hours.

**The consequences of bullying can be catastrophic,** Lang says, because kids often go from pain to anger to revenge—and for kids who cannot strike outward,

**"Kids know more than parents do about the Internet. Parents need to close that gap."**

they may turn inward, which can lead to suicide. She says that if adults give children ways to talk about what is happening and help them come up with solutions, children will gain confidence and learn to trust adults.

If your child has become withdrawn or is acting noticeably different, Holt says it's a good idea to ask, "What's going on at school? Has anything changed with the Internet? Or, has someone started spreading nasty emails about your child? That's a very important thing to know."

Lang says to beware if your child has become isolated and "starts feeling like someone online understands them better than their friends in real life." In that case, an online predator may be "grooming" your child, which means gaining the child's confidence in order to try to meet

face-to-face one day. Holt says that online predators often want to contact a child by phone soon after meeting online.

Just like in the real world, your child shouldn't give out personal information to strangers. If a site requests biographical information, Holt says, create a fake profile or use nonsensical symbols. Don't allow a child to send out personal information such as his or her school schedule or sports teams. "ASL" is a common request from people online—it means a person wants to know your age, sex and location. Your child should never respond to this request, Holt says.

Lang suggests role-playing a scenario where a stranger sends an unwanted message to your child. She says in that situation, the child should contact a parent. The message should be printed, and you should contact local law enforcement. You can also tell your child that if he or she sees an offensive image online to turn off the computer monitor and contact a parent.

**Parents also can learn from their kids about the Internet,** Lang says. She suggests that parents ask their kids to show them where they go on the Internet, and what they can do on a computer. "Kids know more than their parents about the Internet," Lang says. "Parents need to close that gap. Closing that communication gap is important."

*Go online to [stpetersmo.net](http://stpetersmo.net) and click the **Know More** icon for more information and useful links related to Internet safety.*