

# Facebook workshop for youth stresses the 'me' in social media



THE SCOOP

MABLE HASTINGS

Kimberly Nichols presented a workshop at the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre's Youth Centre on March 20 to share strategies to stay safe online.

The workshop, entitled, "The Shocking Truth: What Your Parents Haven't Told You About the Internet" is aimed at youth ages 10 and up and covers topics such as what is okay to share online and how seemingly innocent information shared on social media can be used against you. The experience was enlightening for both parents and youth alike.

As part of their continuous effort to inform youth and parents on a variety of subjects aiming to keep youth safe, the workshop was initiated by the Students Against Destructive Decisions group in Mansonville and they invited Kimberly Nichols who is currently a senior trainer with Performance Training Solutions to host the workshop.

Nichols, an Internet marketing consultant for over a decade, where she spe-



MABLE HASTINGS

More than 20 people attended the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre's workshop on social media. Here, some of the participants react in horror as they find out just exactly what Facebook can do with their personal information. Wait until they find out that Facebook owns Instagram and WhatsApp, too!

cialized in social media marketing for business, has been volunteering for the Youth Centre since 2003. Her workshops and information sessions are always well-attended and a highlight for the parents and youth.

Among the many little-known facts shared with participants that evening, Nichols demonstrated how the "EXIF" data embedded in digital photos provide the exact latitude and longitude of where the photo was taken, which can reveal the photographer's home address.

"Keeping all of your photos private is the easiest way to go," Nichols says, "although that doesn't protect you from the hacks or glitches that social media sites experience quite regularly."

Sharing vacation photos only after you return home may not be as much fun, but it's certainly much safer than posting them in real time.

"There are tools that scan the Internet to help thieves determine the best time to break in to a home," says Nichols. "This is all information you've shared willingly and openly. There's nothing illegal about the way they obtain the information."

Nichols also says that sharing your birthday online is one of the worst things a person can do. She explained how identity thieves only need your birthday, your address and one other piece of information to wreak havoc on your finances which can take years to re-

cover from.

"Many people think they're safe because they hide their birth year," she explained, "but that's not enough, since I could easily guess the year by checking out who their friends are, the year they graduated or who they graduated with." Nichols suggests using two birth dates—your real one for banking, insurance and the government, and a fake one for everything else on the Internet.

According to John Adams, the former chief of Communications Security Establishment Canada, Canadians share more personal information online than any other country.

This is evident in a 2013 study by AVG which found that 92 percent of toddlers aged two and under have a digital footprint—meaning photos and other personal information has been published on the Internet about them creating a virtual trail of digital bread crumbs. Most parents aren't aware that a child's identity can be stolen to open bank accounts and apply for credit cards, just like an adult's.

"The general concept of social media is great," Nichols says, "but in reality it's full of hidden dangers that intelligent and careful citizens aren't even aware of, which puts them at risk every day. And of course, youth growing up in a time when privacy is disregarded are at a much higher risk."

Nichols contends that technology is changing so rapidly that parents, lawmakers and law enforcement agencies can't keep up. "It's up to kids to know how to keep themselves safe."

Nichols also spoke about the thousands of mobile apps that access our personal information, like passwords and calendar details, for no reason.

"People don't question the terms when downloading mobile apps," she says, "but why would an animal game or a keyboard app need to know who you're calling, when you call them and how long you talk?"

There were 21 in attendance for this information session and the Centre is already receiving calls asking when the next one is. By putting the "me" in social media; Kimberly Nichols found both a topic of interest to the youth and a way to provide them with some thought provoking questions to increase their on-line use and safety.



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