Pointers For Parents

Protecting Children In A Multi-Media World

(NAPSA)—Millions of American children watch billions of hours of television each year. Many of them also go to movies and play video games. Taken together, TV, motion pictures, video, newspapers and magazines reach—and influence—today's children virtually from birth. More than any other nation's youth, children in the U.S. today are truly a media generation.

Many parents are not aware of the negative influences media may have on their children. Multiple media sources have tremendous value as learning tools and as positive stimuli, but some children may also be negatively affective by them.

Social science research conducted over the past 40 years indicates that exposure to television violence can produce the following effects:

• Encourage children to learn aggressive behavior and attitudes;

• Cultivate fears and pessimistic ideas in their minds about life in the real world; and

• Desensitize them to real-world and fantasy violence.

While there's less research available that focuses on other, newer media, preliminary research indicates that violent video games or Web content may prove to have similar influences. And as children become more and more computer-literate, monitoring their online activities presents concerned parents with very real challenges.

New Resources for Parents

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (NYVPRC) has assembled current resources on the Web site www.safeyouth.org to help par-

It's important for parents to help children understand the media images around them.

ents and other concerned adults encourage healthy media habits. This Web site is a user-friendly, single point of access to reliable information on all aspects of youth violence prevention. The following tips were gathered from materials available from the Resource Center:

• **Keep track of what children watch, when, and for how long.** Healthy use of media begins with knowing what your children have access to, and what they choose. Watch with them, and help your children make informed choices.

• **Establish boundaries, explain them and stick to them.** Parents know better than anyone what is and is not appropriate for their children, and can set "house rules" to protect children from harmful imagery. You can restrict your children's media access to include only the games, movies, and programs that meet your standards and have your family's seal of approval. Government rating systems for television, movies, games, music, and videos

are useful starting points in providing general guidance, but the more you know, the better equipped you will be to set standards for your family. There are products for your TV, and some cable and satellite systems and internet portals have tools that can help you block out certain programming.

• **Use TV time as an opportunity to talk.** If you watch television with your child, you can spot content that might be confusing or upsetting and take the time to discuss it on the spot. You can also turn such content off—and explain your reasons to your child.

• **Online technologies can help.** The Internet offers an unlimited world of information and activity; it can also be a scary and potentially dangerous place for children, especially if their parents are not aware of what the children are accessing. There are a number of available technologies that block access to unsuitable material that parents can learn about and put to use.

• **Offer other options.** Parents can plan other activities with their children, such as reading, board games, art projects and museum visits that provide opportunities for their children to be active and creative.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center was established as a central source of information on violence committed by and against young people. For more information, log on to www.safeyouth.org, call toll-free 1-866-SAFEYOUTH (723-3968), 1-800-243-7012 (TTY), 301-562-1001 (FAX), or e-mail NYVPRC@safeyouth.org.