

COLLEGE CORNER

Easy Ways To Stay Connected With Children Away At College

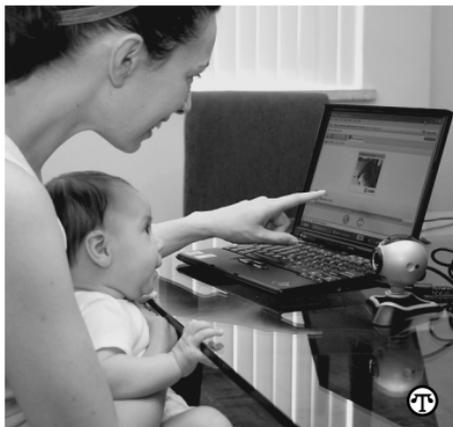
(NAPSA)—Forget the days when parents didn't know how to work an answering machine or stop the clock on the VCR from blinking. In today's fast-paced world, moms and dads are relying on easy-to-use technology to stay in touch with their kids away at college. The best part about being a parent in the know is discovering simple (and low-cost) ways to stay connected.

Catherine Schwartz, HiTech Mommy, suggests parents take advantage of technology that lets them talk with and see their kids without breaking the bank on costly phone bills or inconvenient in-person visits.

She recommends Skype, which gives parents the freedom to make free voice and video calls over the Internet. "All you have to do is download the program from Skype.com and you're ready to call within minutes," Schwartz said.

Schwartz points out that this simple and easy-to-use software lets parents see their children virtually every day, even if their kids attend college far away. Skype video calling is also very popular with students studying abroad. "Imagine meeting your child's Italian host family during his or her semester abroad without leaving your couch," said Schwartz.

All that is needed to make a Skype video call is a computer with a webcam and a broadband



Make unlimited voice and video calls to anywhere in the world for free.

Internet connection. If a computer is not equipped with one, one can be purchased for as little as \$25.

E-mail and text messaging are two of Schwartz's other top picks for parents who want to stay close to faraway kids. "When your child is racing between classes and spending hours on papers, it may be difficult to have a daily check-in with them. E-mail allows you to share family pictures, a funny video seen on YouTube, and the local paper's latest column about your child's high school."

The main lesson for today: Staying in touch with a college student can be easy, inexpensive and fun—whether he or she attends school five or 500 miles away.