

School News & Notes

Industry Alliance Launches Computer-Safety Contest In U.S. Schools

(NAPSA)—Not so long ago, if you asked your children what they had learned in school about safety, they would talk about buckling seat belts, calling 9-1-1 or crawling out of a smoke-filled house. Soon, however, they may well tell you about viruses, spam and identity theft, too.

An alliance composed of Microsoft Corp., Advanced Micro Devices Inc. (AMD), McAfee Inc., United Online Inc., Cox Communications Inc., Comcast Corp. and CyberSmart! is launching a computer virus educational campaign for millions of American students in grades three through eight that will provide them and their parents with information about helping protect their home computer. Called Web Watchers, the program encourages students, teachers and parents to visit <http://webwatchersonline.com> to learn about computer safety and to vote for their school to win up to \$5,000 for new computer hardware and software. Schools can sign up at the site to participate in the program and receive a curriculum, activity books and other material developed by experts such as CyberSmart! on everything from worms and phishing (fraudulent e-mail) to spyware and “spim” (short for “spam over instant messaging”).

The partners know that computer-security education is crucial to providing home PC owners with the tools and resources they need to help protect themselves from these threats. Web Watchers, designed to supplement the existing International Society for Tech-



nology and Education (ISTE) curriculum, provides learning guides to teachers and will support their programs to inform students about ways to use safety technologies with Web sites, e-mail, instant messaging and online chat.

Visitors to WebWatchersOnline.com can view a three-minute overview that walks parents through actions they can take to promote online security features. Then they can vote online for their school to receive technology funding. The five schools that get the most votes will each receive \$5,000 to purchase computers, peripherals and software. The next 100 top vote-getters among the schools will each receive \$1,000.

In addition, the site gives parents the opportunity to send a message to family and friends to encourage them to learn how to help protect their PCs and to vote for their child's school.

The site also features additional information and special offers from companies such as AMD, manufacturer of the AMD Athlon 64 processor, which features Enhanced Virus Protection enabled in Microsoft Windows XP Service Pack 2. “At AMD we devel-

oped our unique Enhanced Virus Protection to improve PC security features and to help protect consumers against specific viruses,” said Marty Seyer, corporate vice president and general manager of the Microprocessor Business Unit, Computation Products Group, at AMD. “AMD cares about consumers, and we truly support this initiative to help protect PC users of all ages worldwide.”

In addition, Microsoft is encouraging parents to visit its own site devoted to security for home computers, at <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security>.

“The Internet can be such an effective tool to deliver opportunities for children to learn, share and participate in their community outside the classroom, but there are risks that need to be understood,” said Anthony Salcito, general manager of Education for the U.S. Public Sector at Microsoft. “The Web Watchers program is intended to empower teachers to educate students and their families, enabling them to make safe and educated decisions when using the Internet.”

Through Web Watchers, the partners are working to equip teachers to better keep up to date on computer-safety information; to help children become more aware of safe-computing techniques; and to encourage parents to take the essential steps necessary to help protect their computer, including downloading Service Pack 2, using a firewall and installing anti-virus software. “Safety first” is still the best lesson our children can learn.