



**CITY OF GAINESVILLE
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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News Release

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date

Social Media Apps Safety

The Gainesville Police Department would like to remind parents on the dangers of Social Media Apps.

This comes after the tragic death of 13 year old, Nicole Lovell, from Virginia. Like many others her age, Nicole was tech-savvy, utilizing social media sites. Unfortunately, Nicole engaged on a social media site with a much older Virginia Tech student, which ultimately led to her untimely death.

We live in a world that embraces technology for a majority of our communications, interactions and relationships. As our society moves the vast majority of their face-to-face interactions online, it shouldn't be shocking that our teens and tweens are increasingly turning to social media to explore relationships.

Too often though, kids include too much personal information ("TMI" in the world of youth), discuss inappropriate behaviors that could get them into trouble, or otherwise place themselves at risk by what they are sharing online. Parents need to have the knowledge to deal with challenges associated with social networking and community websites. Once parents understand the basics, you'll be better able to help your children stay safe when they socialize online.

Parents should use these simple rules to ensure their children's safety:

- Be informed- Keep up to date on the benefits and challenges of social media sites. Know what sites are out there.
- Get your own Social Media profile- This will allow you to better monitor what is going on in the social media community.
- Set Limits- Limit the amount of time your children are allowed to spend on the internet.
- Advise children to be aware of people they don't know- these "friends" may be predators or cyber bullies who want to harm them.
- Encourage them to not use their full name, city, school, and age in text or images, so this information cannot be used to locate the offline.
- Be proactive- review your child's friends list. You may want to only let them be friends with people they know offline.

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Not all social media sites are bad or dangerous. They are merely tools for communication. It's really the users that can be dangerous and what and how they share and communicate.

Children should know that once something is on social media, it is practically impossible to remove or hide it.

The best course of action is to have an open relationship with your children when it comes to social networking. Be consistent with your message when you talk with them and make sure that all parents or guardians are in agreement before the discussion begins. Have on-going discussions and explain why you are doing what you do. In the end, your child's safety is at stake.

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