

Parenting Goes

BY MICHAEL GARFIELD

HIGH-TECH



My three boys have a complex. They think someone is always watching them whether they are online, at school or even at home. They constantly look over their shoulder wondering who could be around the corner ready to pounce on or confront them.

But they are not worried about Internet predators. It's their daddy - The High-Tech Texan - they are concerned about.

I'm actually glad they are a bit wary of me. They know I love them and the only reason I would have to watch over them so closely is to protect them from those aforementioned predators. But Justin, Josh and Adam know their father has a lot of software and gadgets that can indeed monitor almost their every move.

Some of the most asked questions I get on my radio program or during my speeches concern using technology to protect children. My first answer always will be to tell parents it is their responsibility to connect and communicate with their kids. An open dialogue is always the best...though becoming their Facebook friend is a close second.

SOFTWARE SECURITY BLANKETS

Kids are using computers for many things today. From school research to IM'ing to finding movie schedules. But as they surf and submit more of their personal information on the Web the potential for security threats increase.

Specialized software for protecting kids has been around for years. Internet filter and parental control software is easy to install and set up to determine where your children can and cannot go on the Web. Net Nanny and CYBERSitter are programs that can block certain websites but newer software offer even more features.

PC Pandora monitors almost everything done on a computer. The software can record email, IM, chats, keystrokes and all websites visited. It takes snap shots of the pages being visited and allows you to play them back with VCR/DVD play-like functions. Parents can surf through hours of their child's online browsing in just minutes.

It may seem like kids are pretty savvy web users and many parents think that their children are better computer users than they are. But that doesn't mean that kids understand the dangers they might encounter on the Internet or how to avoid them.

I carry a list of five simple guidelines that parents should follow when it comes to online safety:

1) Keep the computer in a common room in the house and position the monitor so it's available for viewing by everyone. Establish rules for using the Internet and teach children how to use the internet safely.

2) Teach children that people online are not always who they say they are and to be especially careful when talking with someone they only know online.

3) Spend time with children online. Ask them to show you their favorite sites, any Web pages or other online content they've created and who they talk to online.

4) Use monitoring, viewing, blocking or filtering programs, but don't rely on them as your only line of defense.

5) If you think your child may be a victim of Internet exploitation, contact your local law enforcement agency or FBI office.

IT'S 10 O'CLOCK: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE?

As kids get older there are more safety issues to worry about than just computers. My oldest son is a few years away from driving but when he gets his license he can be assured that I will be monitoring his every move via gadgets like cell phones and GPS trackers.

Wireless providers such as Verizon Wireless offer specialized devices and services to locate cell phones. Its Chaperone feature is designed to help communicate with your children and finding their location at a given time.

Using the Chaperone Child Locator, you can program the calling buttons from a Web site and perform a location request that displays the location of the phone on a map. A Child Zone can be set to construct areas of the locations that you choose, like a play park or sports field. If your child arrives or leaves the predetermined area, you are alerted via text message on your phone.

Zoombak GPS Locator is a pretty cool gadget I have been playing with a while. It can be used to keep track of children, cars, bikes, luggage or even dogs. It weighs only a few ounces and can be attached to a dog's collar, placed in a backpack or in a car. You can



PC Pandora

- monitors almost everything done on a
- computer. The software can record email,
- IM, chats, keystrokes and all websites visited.

Go online to win one!
www.HoustonFamilyMagazine.com

use the web, your cell phone or call in to a customer service rep to find the device's real time location.

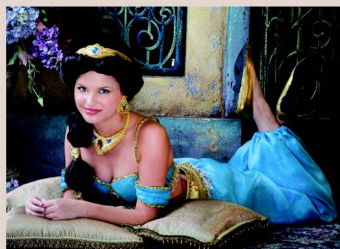
Like Verizon's Chaperone service, you can also set up custom safety zones such as "home," "office" or "school" and be alerted by text or email when your Zoombak leaves or enters that zone.

So if your kids aren't worried that they are being watched while online, with their friends or when cruising the streets, let them know you care enough to talk with them about their safety. And if not, tell them The High-Tech Texan will come over with a handful of software and gadgets to help Mom and Dad keep a watchful eye.

Michael Garfield is known as "The High-Tech Texan®" to millions of radio listeners and TV viewers. His radio program airs in Houston on The 9-5-0 weekdays from 9am-11am and Saturdays 11am-2pm. He is the father of three boys and lives in Ft. Bend County. Visit his website at www.hightechtexan.com.



MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE
Special Dual English &
Spanish Language Version
June 9 – 11 at 11 AM



DISCOVERY GREEN
Concert Version
Friday, June 12 at 11 AM

Welcome to Agrabah, City of Enchantment, where every beggar has a story and every camel has a tail and in two different languages! All of your favorite characters are here in this stage adaptation of the Disney hit, including Aladdin (speaks English), Jasmine (speaks Spanish), and of course, the Genie (speaks both languages). Filled with magic, mayhem, and flying carpet rides, audiences' spirits will soar with excitement as we learn of their adventures through both languages. Most of all, the tuneful, Academy Award-winning score with songs including "A Whole New World" and "Friend Like Me" certainly make this musical a favorite for many years to come!

FREE! All seats are general admission.



SING! DANCE! ACT!

SPEND THE SUMMER AT TUTS!
ALL NEW PROGRAMMING!

- Ages 4-6** – Musical Theatre Camp
- Ages 7-12** – Musical Theatre Camp through the decades
- Ages 7-12** – Acting Camp
- Ages 13-18** – Summer Stock: *Urinetown* and *Rent School Edition*
- Tapfest with Ivery Wheeler
- *Disney Broadway*

NO AUDITION REQUIRED!



REGISTER TODAY! CLASSES FILL UP QUICKLY!
TUTS.com/HSMT 713.558.8801