

# Dakota forum focuses on teen tech dangers



Parents, teens and pre-teens participated in a group discussion at a previous Dakota Family Night Out event. The Sept. 26 Dakota High School Family Night Out will focus on the topic of teens and technology. (Photo courtesy of Dakota High School)

By Nicole Tuttle, For **The Macomb Daily**

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Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange spoke during a prior Dakota Family Night Out event. The Sept. 26 Dakota High School Family Night Out will focus on the topic of teens and technology. (Photo courtesy of Dakota High School)

You don't need to have grown up in the Atari era to miss a recent teen tech trend, since technology changes so rapidly.

What you don't know could hurt you and your teen, however, according to Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange.

"The more involved parents are with their child and technology, then parents can assist them with preventing problems that can come with advanced technology. Many parents do not have an understanding of what apps their child is even using," Lange said.

To close the parent and teen technology gap, Lange and Dakota's Coalition Teen Council will host a Family Night Out event on Sept. 26 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The event will be held at Dakota High School in Macomb Township, located on 21 Mile Road. It is the first Family Night Out event of the school year for Dakota, one of a total of five to be held on different topics, Lange said.

The school atrium will be open for the event. Dinner is included and there is no cost to attend. Attendees must be in sixth grade or over and must be accompanied by an adult. RSVP is due by Sept. 24 by contacting 586-723-2872 or [slange@cvs.k12.mi.us](mailto:slange@cvs.k12.mi.us).

Dakota frequently focuses family night events around technology, each time with new information according to Lange. Prior Family Night Out technology events have focused on online identity theft and security, for example.

“We do one every 18 months or so because technology changes so fast and we want to keep parents as up to date as possible,” Lange said.

The Sept. 26 event will feature a panel including four students, Dakota Media Specialist Kirsten Cook and Dakota Ninth Grade Center Counselor Jill Jeszke. Dakota Coalition Teen Council members were selected for the panel based on interest as well as diversity of grade level and social group, offering perspectives of both boys and girls, according to Lange.

After the panel’s 45- to 60-minute presentation, including questions, attendees will have an opportunity to work together in group discussion for about 35 minutes.

Steam, Vine, Periscope and Snapchat are some of the technologies that will be discussed, Lange said.

“It can be a great way to connect, but if you see others connecting you can feel left out. There is the life people show on social media, and then their real life,” Lange said.

The discussion will also include the topic of teens and technology distraction, meaning distraction from more than just driving, according to Lange.

“It’s not distracted driving so much. We’ll talk about a child with so many notifications on the phone all the time that they can’t get through a math problem,” Lange said.

Technology can distract teens from responsibilities such as chores or family as well, according to Lange. Some teens can’t be separated from their technology devices without anxiety, Lange said.

“Kids that have a hard time putting technology away have a lot of other issues going on too, because how do you get work done, chores done, it interferes with family relationships,” Lange said.

Another part of the discussion will focus on digital drama for teens, Lange said.

“Disclosing of people’s secrets or information, gossip, oversharing, misunderstandings that turn into relationship conflicts, then go public,” Lange said.

The Dakota Coalition Teen Council has 55 members this school year, according to Lange. The council meets monthly at 7 a.m. before the school day begins during the school year, Lange said.

“Kids brainstorm what they see as issues for them and the community,” Lange said.

The next Family Night Out event for Dakota is scheduled to focus on nurturing healthy relationships both at home and at school, Lange said. This Family Night Out will take place on Nov. 28.

*Nicole Tuttle is a freelance reporter for The Macomb Daily.*

