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Three Village Central School District • Office of School and Community Partnerships • November 2008

Partners

HOME
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WORKING TO KEEP *Our Schools & Students Safe*

Recent polls show that parents' first concern about schools today is their child's safety. The Three Village Central School District shares these concerns and has implemented a variety of safety and security practices and procedures throughout the district. From surveillance cameras that monitor the buildings' hallways to the security guard stationed at each entrance to check visitor's identification, the district is equipped with a number of resources in order to ensure that the students and schools are protected at all times.

However, maintaining a high level of safety and security requires a collaborative effort on the part of both the school district and community. Recognizing the need for this partnership, this edition of *Partners* will detail two important items – The Safe School Helpline and information about preventing child abduction.

HELPING YOU, HELP US

Since 1999 the district has partnered with The Safe School Helpline. This reporting service assigns a toll-free number to the district for use by the community. Parents, students, teachers, staff members, and other residents are encouraged to call this hotline to notify the school district of threats of violence, suicide, and illegal activity that could harm children in the district. Starting this year, the district expanded its association with this service to include a new online reporting component.

Any calls or email reports made to this service are kept completely confidential.

This hotline has proven to be useful in the school district over the years, especially in crisis situations. Furthermore, the district feels that this resource helps to create an environment where students feel comfortable reporting things such as weapons in the schools, drugs, and/or abuse.

HOW DO I REPORT?

Reports of any facts, remarks, or actions that could jeopardize the safety of students, staff, or the schools can be made day or night using a home, cell, or pay phone. The toll-free number to call is **1-800-4-1-VOICE, ext. 359**. Additionally, reports can be made online at www.safeschoolhelpline.com.

When you dial the toll-free number or access the website you will be advised how to leave your information and encouraged not to include your name or other facts that could identify you in the message. A copy of the report will be sent to school district officials, who will then investigate the report and determine how to proceed.

Common Questions Answered...

- After a message is recorded using The Safe School Helpline you will be issued a case number. This case number **DOES NOT** identify the individual reporting. However, should you receive any further details about the incident, **you can use this case number to add information to the initial report.**
- This service not only can be used to report threats, but also to **get help for a friend in need**. Reports of thoughts of suicide or other personal problems will be routed to the community counseling and crisis center, which provides a 24-hour crisis intervention service.
- **To find out if any action has been taken** in response to your report, call the toll-free number and enter your case number no sooner than three school days after the report was made. A recording will notify you if your message was received and if more information is needed.

SAFE SCHOOL HELPLINE
1-800-4-1-VOICE, ext. 359 • www.safeschoolhelpline.com

CHILD ABDUCTION CAN HAPPEN ANYTIME & ANYWHERE

On average, a child is reported missing every 40 seconds in the United States, and with 80% of abductions made by strangers, the first contact occurs within a quarter mile of the child's home. In New York State alone, there were 21,100 reported child abductions in 2007.

In the face of these statistics, and in light of recent tragedies, parents have become increasingly aware of the challenge they are faced with - teaching their children to recognize dangerous situations and protect themselves, while reminding them that the world is not a scary place.

AMBER Alert

The AMBER Alert (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) was created in 1996 after nine-year-old Amber Hagerman of Arlington, Texas was kidnapped while riding her bicycle. Tragically, Amber was later found murdered. In the event of a reported child abduction, an AMBER alert is activated and a powerful chain of communication unfolds, from the state police, to radio and television stations that will spread information onto the highways, over the airwaves and through the Internet. New York was the 17th state that implemented a statewide alert system.

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

Parents are reminded that the most important thing they can do in the case of an abduction is to call 911. Law enforcement agencies are required to immediately accept and "strenuously" investigate every missing child case - there is no waiting period required to report a missing child. Parents should be prepared to answer a number of specific questions regarding the incident and the missing child. A recent picture of your child, with vital information such as date of birth, height, and eye color written on the back, is recommended. In recent missing children cases in which such portraits were publicized, accurate photos helped recover 1 in 6 missing children.

Tips For Staying Safe

The following are four important child safety tips that the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services recommends parents and children follow:

- Children should be on the lookout for situations or actions that make them feel uncomfortable, rather than certain kinds of people.
- If someone tries to take you somewhere, quickly get away from them and yell "Someone is trying to take me away!" Say "No", then go and tell an adult.
- If someone follows you on foot or in a car, run to a "safe place." A safe place is where there are other people around ... the home of a neighbor or friend or a store; not a wooded area or unoccupied building.
- Parents should always carry pictures of their children (taken within the last 6 months) and should take time every day to make a mental note regarding the clothing being worn by their children.

NUMBERS TO NOTE

In an Emergency
Dial 911
Suffolk County Police
Department
852.6000
4th Precinct
854.8400
6th Precinct
854.8600
State Police
756.3300

Missing & Exploited Children
Clearinghouse
1.800.FINDKID
Vanished Children's Alliance
1.800.VANISHED
National Runaway Hotline
1.800.231.6946

Sources: Amber Watch Foundation website, www.amberwatchfoundation.org; Child Find website, www.childfind.com; National Center for Missing & Exploited Children website, www.missingkids.com; New York State Criminal Justice website, www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us; Safe School Helpline website and support material www.safeschoolhelpline.com.

*Partners is a publication of the Three Village Central School District
Funded by the NYS Safe & Drug Free Schools & Communities Act Grant*

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