



# Illuminations

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2011

Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta • OCYP Newsletter

## Contact Us

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## 24 Hour Reporting Hotline

**888-437-0764**

*If reporting during regular business hours, call us directly first. If you cannot reach us in person, call the hotline.*



## OCYP National Office

At some point, you will be asked by someone at your parish/school or perhaps a neighbor "What has the Catholic Church done to respond to all the abuses we heard about a few years ago?" Here is your answer (from the OCYP website

[www.usccb.org/ocyp/resources.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/resources.shtml)): The church has set up an aggressive safe environment program that other organizations working with children are beginning to emulate. From the 2009 audit report, we see that the Catholic Church in the United States has:

- Trained more than 2.1 million clergy, employees, and volunteers in parishes how to create safe environments and prevent child sexual abuse.
- Prepared more than 5.2 million children to recognize abuse and protect themselves.
- Run background checks on more the 1,887,000 volunteers and employees, 166,000 educators, 52,000 clerics and 6,000 candidates for ordination.

That is phenomenal work for a seven year period and YOU were a big part of making it all happen! Thanks again for all your patience and perseverance; as you can see it is paying off!



## Safe Environment Program

We encourage you to have one or more group Safe Environment training sessions each year. However, if you have volunteers sign-on to help with programs for children in between your scheduled group sessions, the YOU MATTER video is available for them to view individually on-line at [www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment/video/video-adults.html](http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment/video/video-adults.html). The video is posted in English and Spanish. You can also find the Volunteer Packet of forms for them to sign on-line at [www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment/volunteers.html](http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/senvironment/volunteers.html).



## Victim Assistance Program



**NEW DATE!** The Trauma Recovery Group for male and female adult survivors of childhood trauma has a new beginning date: Thursday evenings 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. February 3, 2011.

**Location:** St. Andrew Catholic Church ♦ 675 Riverside Road ♦ Roswell, GA 30075  
**Dates:** 9 Sessions: Every Thursday night ♦ February 3 - March 31, 2011  
**Cost:** \$25 per session (partial scholarships available)  
**Group Leaders:** Dr. Ann Howe, PhD and Sue Stubbs MS, NCC

Please contact Sue Stubbs at 404-885-7234 x2 or [sstubbs@archatl.com](mailto:sstubbs@archatl.com) for an application or for more information see the flyer on the website at: [www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/vassistance/pdfs/Trauma\\_Group\\_Flyer.pdf](http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/vassistance/pdfs/Trauma_Group_Flyer.pdf)

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## Feature Article

### Social Networking and Your Kids

Sue Stubbs MS, NCC • Director, Victim Assistance Program • Archdiocese of Atlanta

When I was a teenager, I had to meet boys at school, at the mall, or talk with them on my parents' phone. There was no e-mail, no texting, no MySpace, Facebook, or Google Chat. These 'new' avenues of communication are collectively referred to as social networking media and many parents with tweens, teens, and college age children are baffled by the prevalent and often compulsive use of these media among their offspring. In a recent chat with my thirteen-year-old niece, she was telling me about a boy she has been Google Chatting with that she 'met' through another Google Chat friend. He noticed she had 'horse' in her chat name and shared with her that his family has a horse farm in Kentucky where he lives.



*If she had met this guy at school or at the mall, he would have naturally come in contact with many of the adults in her life. But meeting him on-line keeps them isolated in their own little world of two until an adult checks up on what is going on and makes sure there is legitimacy on his end.*



I pointed out to her some things she needs to consider when meeting people on-line to be sure they are not presenting themselves as something they are not. She assured me she has given him no identifying information about herself (where she lives, where she goes to school, her last name, etc.), but she does consider him a friend at this point.

This just demonstrates that she has picked up on some of the safety training about the use of these social networking media, but she clearly hasn't yet absorbed how to discern whether someone is

on the up and up. That is what the adults in her life are for.

How do we teach our children how to do this? Have your child show you how these social networking sites work; have them taught you something for a change! They will love this and it can open the door to a frank discussion about the very issues that need to be addressed. Share with them that every so often you are going to sit down with them and go over all the people they are connected with on-line and their interactions, asking them a series of questions about recent 'chats' such as: "Have you talked about meeting? Have you given him/her any identifying information? Have you both sent each other pictures – if so, let's look at them together and see if there is anything on there that is out of bounds. Has he/she initiated or encouraged chats about drinking, sex or doing things your parents don't know about? Does he/she give balanced advice when you complain about problems at home or does he/she just agree and encourage you to tune your family out and make decisions on your own or his/her advice?" Be clear that a YES answer to any of these questions is not acceptable and talk more about how some of these actions are unsafe and may point to the possibility that this person is trying to steer them into things that are dangerous.

This is the way we teach our kids how to discern if someone they have never met in person is in this virtual friendship for themselves or for each of their mutual benefit. If we do this when they are tweens and teens, then once they are in college this will be second nature to them and they will know how to use these media wisely. It just takes time and it will bond you with your child as you are showing an interest in something they are socially dependent upon.

Virtual relationships are here to stay, thus it falls on parents to teach their children how to navigate and use them sensibly, safely and honorably. It IS worth the time you need to give it!