

Sheriff shares social media advice

Editors note: the following was submitted by Brown County Sheriff John Merchant

I would like to take this opportunity to remind folks about social media and what should and should not be shared. There have been recent events where people have put too much information on social media sites.

Most of these folks are very caring, helpful people and tend to give very graphic details or even pictures of certain events that happen in our county. I commend people who are always ready to help those in need, but please take a moment to reflect on whether to put out to the world what you have done or seen, and why the need to do it.

Before posting information, please ask yourself a few simple questions.

- #1. If this were my family or group of friends, would they approve of what I am about to post.**
- #2. Is this something that I would want my child or family member to see.**
- #3. Would I appreciate this type of information being posted about myself or my family.**
- #4. Am I posting this because I am mad, over-emotional or upset about a person or incident. If so, wait until you calm down and see if it is still appropriate.**
- #5. If I don't have the nerve to say something in person, why would I put it on social media.**

Everyone needs to remember that anything you put on-line is there for anyone to see. You might send to certain individuals, but are you sure they will in turn, be confidential with what you have given them.

Many jobs, marriages, friendships and relationships have been ruined because of gossip on social media. This has become a major source of controversy not only in our county, but across the nation. So many times I hear people referring to something they have read on FACEBOOK or on line and they take it as 100% fact. This is not always the case, be informed before you make a judgement about others.

There have many been incidents where our children are being bullied on social media, text messages etc. When complaints are investigated, many times we find that the parent or caregiver is just as bad or worse than their child. Children live what they learn. As parents or caregivers, it is our obligation to teach our kids the proper way to use this potentially harmful resource.

Our children are being targeted at an alarming rate by human traffickers and pedophiles because they are allowed to have free, unlimited and unsupervised access to computers and cell phones. This is an easy way for these criminals to take advantage of our children as many sites do not verify identity. Kids may think they are chatting with one of their peers but in all reality, it is most likely a predator. As parents, we have the responsibility and the right to review and inspect our children's devices at any time to make sure they are using them accordingly and safely.

I ask anyone who has any questions or concerns about social media use or abuse to contact my office. Social media is a tool and it is only as good or bad as the person who is using it.

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