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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Facebook Parenting...for Kids Under 13?

Amidst the release of Facebook's statement that the company is testing ways to allow children under 13 to access their site under parental supervision, many have been discussing the moral issues of introducing preteens and children to the social networking site. Facebook for kids features may include connecting children's accounts to their parents' and controls that would allow parents to decide whom their kids can "friend" and what applications they can use. Facebook claims that 7.5 million children under 13 have profiles by lying about their age, so this plan would allow children safe access to the site. Regardless of the intent, there are a number of key issues every parent should know and practice if they plan to allow their children on the site.

Children under 13 are generally not mentally or emotionally developed enough to prudently understand the "do's and don'ts" of an average social networking site, however if you decide to help your child create a Facebook profile, make clear with him or her that Facebook is a privilege, not an expectation – children must earn trust by showing responsible behavior. Second, have access to your child's password and be able to see every notification that he/she receives (such as when someone writes on a wall, picture, or sends a message to your child). You can do this by setting up your child's Facebook account to email the notifications to your personal email address. Third, the computer should be placed in a public location, such as the living room. Finally, you and your child should create rules about when to log onto Facebook; for example, children can only log on for two hours on weekdays, when the parents are home.

If you plan to let your preteen or child set up a Facebook account, it is important to understand how it works. Children AND parents should both attend an Internet safety class and a bullying class that covers cyber bullying. The Parenting Center is hosting several free classes on "Preteens in the Wireless Age" at Fort Worth Libraries:

- East Berry, 8-8-12, 6:30 – 7:30
- Northwest Branch 8-11-12, 10:30 – 11:30
- Southwest Regional Branch, 9-6-12, 6:30 – 7:30
- Summerglenn Branch, 9-20-12, 6:30 – 7:30

To learn more and sign up for these classes, log onto www.theparentingcenter.org. The Parenting Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Fort Worth, Texas with a mission of *providing families the tools to succeed*.

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