

Village gets its first taste of cyberspace bullying in new case

By LISA AURAND
and MEREDITH SOMERS

Suburban News Publications

A romance gone bad led to New Albany's first arrest for cyberbullying on Saturday, Dec. 1.

New Albany police arrested a 15-year-old New Albany High School student after he admitted to officers that he harassed a fellow student on the social networking site facebook.com, Police Chief Mark Chaney said.

Death threats against the girl, a 15-year-old fellow high school student, prompted her and her family to contact the police, Chaney said.

"We've had some reports of (cyberbullying)," he said "In this one, it went too far."

The victim, an ex-girlfriend of the teen, told the *New Albany News* that about a week before the harassment and aggravated menacing charges were filed, her friends had begun to hear rumors that she was talking behind their backs - rumors

started by her ex-boyfriend, she said.

As the days continued, the victim said she found herself increasingly isolated from her group of friends. The boy was harassing her by cell phone, e-mail, instant messaging and on the Internet, often using profanity, police said.

Her strategy at the time was to ignore the hurtful acts allegedly committed by the boy.

"I wanted to not show how much it was bothering me," she said.

"If there's a threat of physical harm, that's something the police should get involved in right away."

-Police Chief Mark Chaney on cyber bullying

But it was a Facebook group dedicated to those who hated the girl that drove her to report the harassment to the police, the victim said.

"The group made it really bad," she said. "Everyone turned against me."

She contacted a guidance counselor at the high school, who informed the dean of students. Security was called, and eventually the village police.

"We asked him to come in with his parents present (on Dec. 1)," Chaney said of the boy. "He was read his rights and we

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asked about the case. He said yes, he had done some of those things. He was then released to his parent's custody. The prosecutor said to go ahead and file the charges.

He was charged with misdemeanors for aggravated menacing and telecommunications harassment. The case will proceed through Franklin County's juvenile court, Chaney said.

On its Web site at US-CERT.gov, the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team defines cyberbullying as "using technology to harass, or bully, someone else."

"Forms of cyberbullying can range in severity from cruel or embarrassing rumors to threats, harassment, or stalking," the site says in a cyber security tip.

The site also explains that cyber bullying is appealing because lack of personal contact makes it easier to be anonymous.

That's what the New Albany victim, thinks, too, and it might help explain why the problems started right around Thanksgiving break, when neither was in school and in face-to-face contact with each other, she said.

"It's easier to be mean on the computer," the victim said.

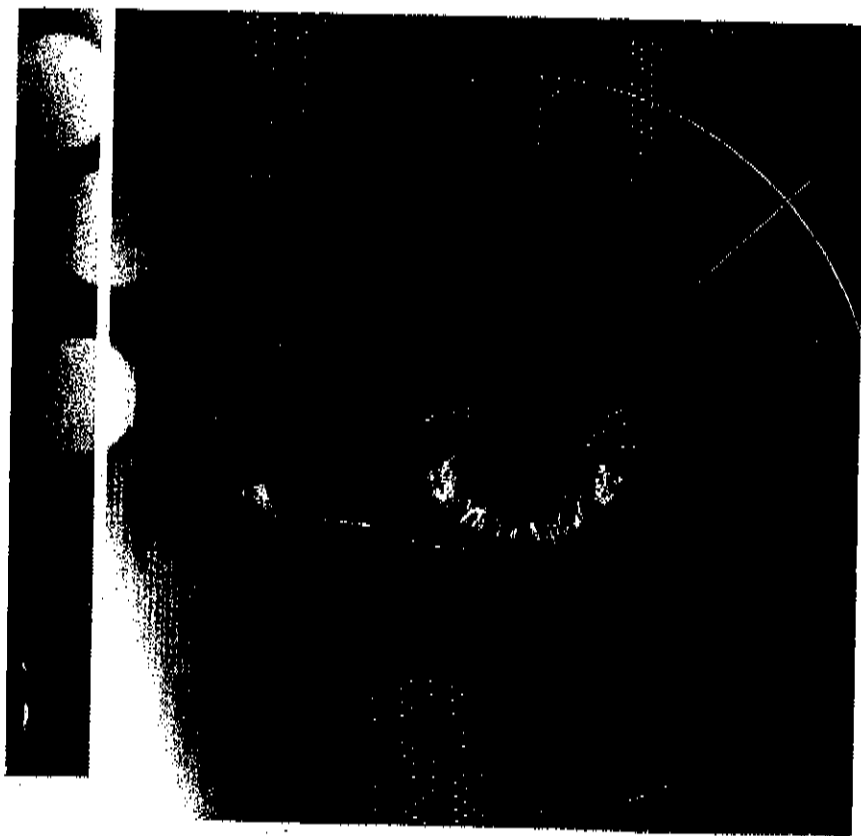
Chaney advised parents to pay attention to children's communications and to contact law enforcement if they turn violent.

"If there's a threat of physical harm, that's something the police should get involved in right away," Chaney said.

New Albany police officers are trained to investigate online crime and know how to subpoena records from social networking sites such as Facebook, he said.

"These things have happened ever since kids have been going to school. I think the key is to look at the extent of the threat, how long it's been going on and the nature of the threat."

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MySpace Discovery

Lawyers are mining social networks for nuggets of evidence

FRIENDS, ENEMIES, POTENTIAL employers—and now even attorneys—may be checking out your MySpace page. MySpace and other social networking sites on the Internet can be caches of evidence.

"A few years ago, lawyers would call and say they had no idea what [MySpace] was," says Jeff Fischbach, a Chatsworth, Calif., forensic examiner, "but now everybody keeps talking about it."

Criminal defense lawyers use social networking sites the most, usually to investigate witnesses, according to Fischbach.

"It's a tool that is out there," says Eugene, Ore., lawyer Laura Fine, who found evidence on the Net while she represented a teenager accused of forcible rape.

The witness told police that

she would never willingly have had sex, according to Fine, but her page on MySpace said something different.

"She talked about parties, drinking and 'getting some,'" Fine says.

The page also displayed provocative photos of the young woman, according to Fine, and a lascivious screen name.

The page was meant to be private, but lawyer Fine viewed it over the shoulder of another witness, who gained access through a MySpace group he and the girl belonged to.

The girl's parents would not allow the lawyer to interview her, but Fine says she found out what she needed to know from the site. She also got a good sense of how the young woman would present to a grand jury.

Based on what she read, Fine called the girl as a witness, and ultimately the grand jury dismissed the charge.

"What you put on MySpace, essentially, becomes public consumption. There's no right of privacy," says John Wesley Hall Jr., a Little Rock, Ark., criminal defense lawyer who writes extensively on evidence issues.

Besides looking for information on witnesses, Hall investigates clients through various personal Web pages.

"I'd rather know where the land mines are so I don't walk into one," he says.

Prosecutors, Hall adds, generally don't use online networking sites as much.

Often, that's because they end up with better evidence obtained through search warrants, says Clinton Parish, a Yolo County, Calif., deputy district attorney.

A POST ISN'T PROOF

PARISH IS PROSECUTING A CASE IN which police say they found information about marijuana sales on a MySpace page. Police used the page, which included images of the suspect, his girlfriend and his car, to get a search warrant, Parish says. Rajneel Kumar was arrested and charged with felony possession for sale of methamphetamine and marijuana.

But proving Kumar wrote the text detailing his business or posted pictures of his alleged marijuana plants may be difficult. Evidence seized during the search warrant could prove more effective in the prosecution, Parish says.

Fischbach predicts that as lawyers become more familiar with networking sites, prosecutors will use them more frequently.

"It would be really wise if every attorney [did an Internet search for] all the individuals involved in a case, just so they know what they're up against," Fischbach says.

—Stephanie Francis Ward

Why I Love It...

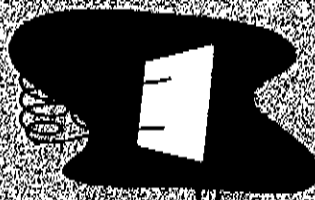
Facebook has become the dry-erase tabula rasa of my life—and of my 1,042 closest friends (and counting).

BY KURT SOLLER

I have three fond memories from my senior year of high school: the day I got my college acceptance letter, the day I graduated and the day I joined Facebook. The latter happened on a May afternoon before graduation, when a college friend e-mailed me an invitation to join. I was 17, and anything the older kids were doing was automatically cool. All I needed was an attractive profile photo (easier said than done) and a well-curated list of interests to meet the friends I always dreamed I'd have in college: people who preferred Faulkner over Hemingway, liked thrift shopping and wanted to sneak into Chicago jazz clubs. Facebook became my dry-erase tabula rasa. Under favorite quote, I wrote, "True friends stab you in the front," as Oscar Wilde said. For the section titled "About Me," I said, "I like to write, but writing about me is difficult."

As summer days passed and friend requests poured in, it didn't matter that I'd never met these people, because soon we'd be on campus together at Northwestern. When I landed at O'Hare that September, I met a girl who had seen my profile and wanted to introduce herself. Later, when I walked in on her in bed with a dormmate, she told me, "Don't be awkward." After all, we'd already met on Facebook.

As Facebook grew up alongside us, it improved our collective social lives—all 1,042 friends of mine and counting. I can't go to a sorority formal or football game without photos from the event winding up on Facebook, uploaded by me or a friend. Sure, it may be overly indulgent



All I needed to meet friends was an attractive photo and a well-curated list of interests.

and some of the pictures are unflattering, but this constant chronicling of life eliminates the secret diary or crafty scrapbook. Before Facebook, I may have written some words in my journal about a wild night in Chicago; now my friends and I are building each other's collective stories one photo, caption and poke at a time.

Facebook is my personal assistant, allowing me to catch up on my social life without telephone tag, awkward lunches and five-10-15-year reunions. We write on each other's Wall, a message board, when we want to say happy birthday without singing into an answering machine. When I'm having a hectic week at my internship, I can change my status so that people know why I haven't returned their telephone calls—much better than wasting time calling people to tell them you're too busy to talk.

It may seem artificial that I don't have to go out of my way to get in touch. But in the end, I've beaten the system: I have more time for my closest friends, those whose relationships transcend computers. And Facebook enriches those close friendships: when a best friend changed her dating status from "In a Relationship" to "Single," I brought over a movie, one that she had listed as a fave.

You've heard criticism that Facebook makes us robotic, but history shows we've always feared new communication tools. In 360 B.C., Plato criticized writing, saying that it would induce forgetfulness. 2,200 years later, the telephone was seen as invasive and unnecessary. Mark Zuckerberg being more optimistic than the next Samuel Morse or Alexander Graham Bell, we all want to interact as fast we can, and Facebook allows us to do that. That said, if you're thinking of befriending me after reading this, you should know: I'm not in the market for any more friends.

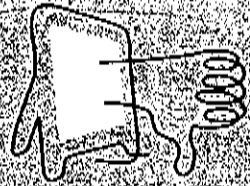
... And Why I Hate It

The site nurses my worst self-indulgent instincts. Does anyone really care that I love penguins?

BY SARAH KLIFF

I have no idea how many hours of my life I've wasted on Facebook. When I wake up each morning, with my laptop sitting on the edge of my futon, I check it. Before I've thought about brushing my teeth, I have already seen the photographs of my brother's new apartment in San Francisco and discovered the evidence of my friend's tumultuous breakup: she changed her relationship status from "In a Relationship" to "Single" to "It's Complicated," all while I was sleeping. As best I can figure, since joining the site in 2004 when I was a freshman at Washington University in St. Louis, I've been logging on a dozen times a day. When I should have been studying or working, I found myself instead doing tasks like flipping through 400 photos of myself online, debating whether I wanted the picture where I have food in my hair to be on display to the world. (I decided to leave it. Why? It's not the most attractive pose; I think it indicates that I am a laid-back, good-humored person.)

I spend an inordinate amount of time like this, worrying about what's in my online profile. When I graduated from college this May, I decided it was time for a Facebook makeover. Looking to present a more professional image, I stripped my profile of many of my college interests—you'll no longer know from Facebook that I'm obsessed with penguins—and I purged my membership in questionable Facebook groups such as "Scotland? Sounds more like Holland" (tamer than it sounds). I know I'm not the only one constantly revamping my cyber-



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status, a fill-in-the-blank feature where users can let people know what they're up to at any moment. Mine is currently set to "Sarah is trying to write an article about Facebook... but is ironically too distracted by Facebook." The network is so much about obsessing over the tiny details of my life as it is about connecting with others.

As a recent college graduate, with my friends scattered across the globe, I understand the communicative value of Facebook. Right now I have 469 "friends"—though I admit many of these virtual relationships are tenuous at best. Still, I would be hard-pressed to give up my four-year-long membership or leave Facebook out of my early-morning routine. But who knows what I'm missing out on in the real world while sitting at my laptop, debating whether penguins or bagels are more respectable?

image, according to my Facebook account, 109 of my friends have changed something over the past two days. One friend added "goofy dads" to her interests, and another let it be known that he "falls asleep easily" and "loses things all the time."

What is with all this time we've spent thinking about ourselves and creating well-planned lists of our interests? Facebook is much worse than e-mail, cell phones, instant messaging and the other devices that keep me constantly connected. It nurses every self-indulgent urge I could possibly have. I hate that Facebook encourages me to hone in on each of my idiosyncrasies—that I like running in Central Park, for example, or that my favorite forms of punctuation are the dash and semicolon—and broadcast them to a largely uninterested world. I have a sneaking suspicion that very few people want to know that I am particularly fond of bagels. And no one really cares when I change my Facebook

Facebook ads annoy some users, help others

Profile pages used to hawk products

By Andrew Tobias
FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Facebook's new marketing program makes it easier than ever for advertisers to target its nearly 55 million users.

But some students complain that the popular social-networking Web site is becoming little more than a virtual billboard.

"It's obnoxious," said Kate Baldwin of Westerville.

Baldwin, 23, who will graduate soon from Otterbein College, doesn't usually notice the advertisements displayed on the left side of the profile page she set up on Facebook.

But she can't help but notice the ads in her news feed, she said.

The news feed is a list that informs Facebook users of changes made to friends' profiles. Facebook automatically posts updated informa-

tion to the news feed, which users can privately access when they log into their accounts.

Now, advertisers can use the news feed to feature their products.

Haley Kish, 20, a journalism student at Ohio State University, said the new feature is annoying.

"I just want to see what my friends have to say or look at pictures," she said. "I don't want to be talked into buying a new car."

Beacon, one part of Facebook Ads, has drawn criticism for invasion of privacy. Through Beacon, online shoppers' recent purchases on Web sites such as Blockbuster.com and Overstock.com showed up in friends' news feeds.

Although shoppers had two chances to "opt out" of sharing the information, many users said they didn't see

them.

A protest petition electronically signed by more than 50,000 users was submitted to Facebook. As a result, users now must explicitly give permission or "opt in" to share their purchases with friends.

Facebook was available only to college students when it was started in 2004. Beginning in 2005, high-school students could join, and in September 2006, Facebook was opened to the public.

That changed the site significantly, said Ryan Galica, 22, an OSU undergraduate pharmacy student. He likes being able to keep in touch with more people but said the Web site has become more of a "money-making machine." He doesn't mind the advertising, though.

Kish noticed that Facebook's advertising has become more targeted in the past few weeks. She lists about six dozen favorite bands on her profile and

now gets ads on her page promoting rock concerts as far away as Michigan.

Facebook's Web site says advertisers can target users by age, location and gender as well as interests.

Singer-songwriter Ryan Smith, who lives in Victorian Village, has successfully used advertisements on Facebook to promote his music since the beginning of the year.

Facebook's self-service features allowed Smith to instantly submit an ad of his choice using online forms. That feature has been expanded, and Smith, 27, can now focus his ads to age-appropriate groups.

"To advertise a college bar show, I don't need to tell people who are 65 about it because they're not going to come," he said.

Smith pays a negotiated fee each time someone clicks on his ad. Facebook has told him that two recent ads were

viewed more than 130,000 times during 2½ weeks.

Although Facebook's do-it-yourself approach to advertising is convenient for people such as Smith, it also can lead to abuse.

Adam Glass, 22, a North Side resident and a May graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, was shocked when he found advertising depicting a topless woman on his Facebook profile Thanksgiving morning.

He was upset that a Web site used by minors would display pornographic advertising and complained to Facebook, which is investigating.

Several popular blogs reported similar complaints about the ad Glass saw.

Facebook did not respond to e-mailed requests for comment. But Facebook guidelines say advertisements can't contain or endorse sexual activity or nudity.

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