

i-Safe program taught by students to protect students

by Sarah Adams, Staff Writer

While most parents believe they know what their children do on the Internet, they might be surprised.

In a recent study completed by i-Safe America, a non-profit foundation to educate youth on Internet safety, 69 percent of parents said they felt like they knew what their children were doing on the Internet, but 41 percent of students (in grades five through 12) said they did not tell their parents what websites they visited.

The Grant County Young Professionals Organization, YPO will be using the i-Safe program to educate Grant Countians about Internet safety.

The i-Safe program will make students, business people and other community citizens aware of the dangers the face online.

Rita Denief, technology integration specialist for Grant County Schools, said she felt the program would be successful in Grant County after attending i-Safe training.

"We have a huge number of students who are online," Denief said. "There is a big digital divide between what parents think their children are doing and what children are actually doing on the Internet.

"Parents want to know what their children are looking at on-line," Denief added.

"Students want to be informed about safety issues too."

Denief said students in her program were surprised to learn how easy it is for strangers to obtain their private information.

"I didn't realize how easy it is for people to break into my information," Jenny Daughtery said. "All people need to know to track you is your gender, zip code and date of birth."

Daughtery is a GCHS student involved with YPO. The group was trained to present the i-Safe material to freshman entering GCHS next year. They created PowerPoint presentations on i-Safe and worked with community leaders to perfect their speeches.

The i-Safe training was completed as part of the CEO University held at GCHS June 6-10. Students involved in YPO joined students selected by teachers for their leadership skills to learn about money management, professionalism and work ethic.

"This week has represented their work life," Denief, who helped coordinate the CEO University as a YPO sponsor, said. "Tomorrow (Friday) they will retire and get to spend their retirement money."

Although i-Safe training was only one component of the CEO University, it will have a lasting impact on Grant County as students present their information to community members.

Jill Marksberry, Grant County Community Education Director, was able to help fund the i-Safe training

with a service learning grant. This grant will enable students to take their knowledge out into the community to educate others.

Students trained on i-Safe education will hold seminars for businesses with topics such as virus prevention and appropriate workplace Internet access. They will also hold seminars for parents to discuss keeping children safe on-line.

"I am extremely impressed with these students," Marksberry said. "They pick-up on things so quickly. They are like sponges."