

Hello Sagewood Families,

I am Deputy Jim Lowe for those that don't know me. I am the Sagewood Middle School, Resource Officer.

I want to share a concerning trend we have seen lately with school aged children. As you all know, social media and smartphone apps can allow students and adults to communicate in anonymous and hurtful ways. In many of the situations we work through here at the school, social media posts and messaging are involved in some way either before or after.

Apps like Snapchat and Telegram allow users to create a profile name and communicate anonymously. Some of these apps allow users in an area to communicate just by their proximity to one another. There are many more apps like this and more released every month. Also, apps like Snapchat have allowed users to access their accounts from any other connected device. This means that if you restrict access to your student's phone, they can very easily access their account from another device or computer. My suggestion would be to remove these apps from your student's devices until they are older and better able to handle an app like these.

I have seen these apps used to buy and sell illegal substances, solicit inappropriate pictures from users, and more. The text streams along with pictures are often deleted a short time after they are sent. If a crime is committed through the use of one of these apps it can take many months to be able to identify the user through a court order and may not be possible to retrieve the shared content.

These apps are very easily used to bully and isolate students when there is a conflict of some sort. This is middle school so there is no shortage of conflict. Our young citizens are often pressured into taking a side in a situation when they do not have all the information.

Please take some time to connect with your child and talk about how to appropriately use their smartphones, devices, and social media. I would strongly suggest that you periodically scroll through your child's cellphone and become familiar with their friends and find out what apps they have on their phones and devices. I used a free app with my 4 kids that allowed me to know and approve any apps they are loading on their phones. I also was able to set daily usage amounts and timeframes that the phone can be used.

I think it is important for our student's mental well-being to set limits and teach them how to be kind to others in the digital world. Thank you!

I want to be a resource to both you and your student(s) so please do not hesitate to contact me.

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