



Project Protect, Part III

Providing practical ways to keep your family safe in today's culture.

by Penny Harrington, Director of Legislation, Concerned Women for American of California

Have you been to the supermarket or discount department store lately and seen the periodical racks? From *Cosmopolitan* and its seemingly endless archives of sex tricks to *Stuff*, *FHM*, *Maxim* and other soft porn, there's a veritable mine field of sexually charged material inches away from our kids' eyes.

Take a Stand

While corporations often choose profit over principle, as a patron of your local stores you have more power there than you may think. You just need to exercise it. When you see objectionable material within the sight and reach of children, consider taking it to the store manager. Politely ask if he or she is aware of the content and its how easily accessible it is for children. Ask that they remove the material entirely or at least make it off limits to children. Blinder racks can be installed at checkout counters to block the racy pictures and vulgar headlines as you stand in line to buy that new toy or box of cereal. Managers will often comply, but check back to see if the material returns and, if it has, ask again. Always thank store personnel for their willingness to help protect their children in their community. If you hit a roadblock, ask for the number to the store's corporate office and continue the process. Consider shopping elsewhere if you are rebuffed and let the store manager as well as the corporate office know why you've made your decision. Let other parents know, too. Perhaps they will join your effort.

The same action plan holds true for merchandise, like T-shirts with raunchy messages. Last year, some high school girls in Pennsylvania held an effective "Girlcott" of Abercrombie and Fitch (the infamous retailer already the object of boycotts because of their nudity-laced catalogs). They wanted the retailer to stop carrying shirts that bore slogans supposedly designed for laughs, but which the teenagers considered offensive and degrading toward women and girls. Their efforts, which called for other young women to stop shopping at the chain, led the company to stop selling several of its shirts.

Check Out the Neighborhood

Take care that the policies you set at home for movies, television, video games and music aren't undone when your child steps inside a friend's house. Talk to the parents so they know, for example, that your son isn't allowed to watch anything rated higher than "G" without calling home first. Ask if they have filtered Internet access and what their use policies are. You may find that you're helping educate another family about dangers they hadn't considered. If you're concerned that there is not adequate protection or you are met with opposition, plan on having the kids play at your home.

Know your neighborhood. You can check the sex offender database maintained by the California Department of Justice at www.meganslaw.ca.gov to see if there are persons to be wary of living near you. Of course, always be sure your children understand stranger danger.

Be Vigilant at School

Be sure that your school has filters on its computers in the library and the classrooms. Check the reading lists and familiarize yourself with the books your child will be asked to read. Unfortunately, many lists utilize data from the American Library Association (ALA). According to their own Web site, the ALA “opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.” Its 2006 “Notable Children’s Books” list includes *Totally Joe*, a story about an eighth grade boy whose “English journaling assignment helps him express his growing self-awareness.” Thus, some books on your child’s recommended reading lists may contain sexually-explicit material, offensive language and topics inappropriate for certain ages. If you are concerned, talk to the teacher and ask for an alternate selection. Several Web sites review books for parents, including Citizens for Literary Standards in Schools (www.classkc.org) and Parents Against Bad Books in Schools (www.pabbis.org). The Christian Library Journal (www.christianlibraryj.org) requires a subscription, but has a viewable sample issue as well.

Check out your child’s pleasure reading outside school, too. The popular “Gossip Girls” series bill itself as “‘Sex and the City’ for the younger set.” Hmmmm. You can probably bypass that bunch! Yes, reading needs to be an important part of our children’s lives but, like all other input they receive, it needs to be overseen by their parents.

Review the sex education program before placing your child in a class that could expose them to explicit sexual material and convey beliefs and attitudes that do not coincide with your family’s. The only way to know is to check the curriculum yourself. Look at the books, the ancillary materials and talk to the instructor. Get the facts about any outside groups that might be teaching this subject matter. Be one of the tiny minority who actually review what their children will learn in this most sensitive area. Your children are worth it! Consider opting out of school sex education classes unless they have a truly abstinence-only curriculum. You may find the teaching you do at home to be some of the most valuable time you spend with your child. Materials like Focus on the Family’s “Preparing for Adolescence” and Pam Stenzel’s “Sex Has a Price Tag” help facilitate important discussions so you can guide and direct sex education for your family.

Understand that sex ed is not the only class in school where your child may be exposed to sexual topics at all grade levels, including kindergarten. Many high schools have Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and so-called “Safe Zones” where the discussion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender behavior is accepted. The California Legislature is largely marching to the tune of the homosexual agenda and many schools are adopting suggested changes to curricula and activities that normalize homosexual behavior. These suggestions may soon be requirements if proposed legislation is passed this year. Talk to your children’s teachers and know what the administration’s policies are about these moral topics that are the purview of the family and not the schools.

Get Involved

Concerned Women for America’s mission is to educate and equip citizens to promote Biblical values in our culture through prayer and action. We’re working to help raise awareness of the threats to our families and provide ways to be involved as Christian citizens. Our California Web site (<http://ca.cwfa.org>) includes targeted legislation with points to help understand the issues and sample letters to make contacting officials easy. A monthly newsletter can be downloaded for use at your church and there’s a free e-alert sign up to bring these topics right to your e-mail box. We also have Prayer/Action chapters of like-minded men and women who meet once a month to pray and take action on critical issues. We welcome your involvement. Together we have a greater impact.

This series highlighted important steps we can take to help protect our children, and in many cases ourselves, in this technology-driven culture. Overall, the best defensive and offensive strategy is to pray. Pray for wisdom in guiding and directing your children. Pray that they will be protected from things they should not see or hear and people who would do them harm. Pray that

they will be able to withstand temptation at home, at school and with their peers. Pray that pastors and churches will take their right place in educating their congregations about the threats to our families, faith and freedom and not shy away from citizen involvement that is part of our calling as Christians. *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)*

If we don't help turn the cultural tide, who will? May we all be salt and light in our homes, schools, workplaces, communities and government for the sake of our families and our future.

Looking for resources? For information on Internet filtering and more resources to help you as a parent, visit our Web site at <http://ca.cwfa.org> and click the "Protect Your Family" link. Download the Project Protect Resource list and CWA's "14 Ways to Protect Your Children Online" brochure. Consider purchasing a copy of the valuable book *Protecting Your Child in an X-Rated World* by Frank York and Jan LaRue at <http://shop.cwfa.org/cwfa/>.

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