

# PARENTS TO PARENTS

Our daughter, Laura, like so many other children these days, is hooked to the computer the way we used to be hooked to the telephone. The computer has become the "virtual" telephone party line we could have only dreamed of when we were kids. This is the age of AOL and "IM's" - Instant Messaging- Chat Rooms - Biogs (internet journals) - and Websites like Xanga - where you can sign up and have your own web page up and running in minutes. Have you ever marveled at the speedy typing skill of your children? It is probably because they are typing responses to multiple IM conversations with their friends while still "chatting" in the rooms and answering their e-mail.

If you don't have a clue about what we're talking about it is important that you take the time to learn. The internet is an incredible place that covers everything you could possibly think of from A to Z. It presents every facet of life - good and bad - and appeals to the best and worst intentions. It is also a virtual playground of pornography where predators stalk their victims. Westchester DA Jeannine Pirro's office has been very successful in trapping many of these predators "online." Her net, cast out into the internet, has caught many people who are in prominent positions in our community.

Laura has shared many IM's with friends talking about how glad they are she was brave to come forward. Some are sharing their own stories with Laura - but not with you - their parents. Next time you see them typing away on the computer - sit down - talk to them. Ask them to talk about their feelings. Maybe visit our website together. Maybe they'll even teach you something about the computer. And contact us if you have any information - you can make a difference! We encourage you to become informed and get involved for the safety of our children!

We want to thank everyone for your letters of support. Visit the new page on our website called "Speak Your Mind" featuring e-mails and letters from the community. We update the site daily.

(All documents on the website are public record or have been offered to us with permission to publish.)

We thank you, *Lynn & Peter Bliss*

